Chocolate Hearts

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Characters:	As above, Jack Crawford, Brian Zeller, Rust Cohle, Georgia Madchen, the mountain men, Freddie Lounds, Chiyoh, Mischa Lecter, Abel Gideon, Alana Bloom, Jimmy Price, Bedelia Du Maurier
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Chocolate Hearts

by AtticusCrete

Summary

Ch 1 bit of St Valentine's Day flummery. Set around Buffet Froid. Will and Hannibal go out for Valentine's dinner.

Ch 2 and 3 mostly Buffet Froid related and coat buying fic for Mischa, Beverly and Freddie Lounds (yeah you read that right)

Ch 4 the aftermath of Will's decision plus happy Hannigram sex! And sensible discussions. Amazeballs they used words! And Rust returns with some friends.

Ch 5 some more evidence turns up, Hannibal forgets Will is tied to a bed! Beverly in 'I'd be a great Will Graham' mini drama. A potential disaster is averted, another one isn't. Roll on chapter six...

Ch 6 Gideon escapes, the Freddies are rescued but at what cost. Chiyoh is as loyal as ever. Will Hannibal happen?

This is the Dr Plushy Pants AU, the first instalment is 'a terrible name for a Museum' 21 episodes later here we are. Roughly a season 1 AU with a few extra deaths and events. We still don't know if Hannibal is the Ripper or not. If he is does Will Know?

Mischa is alive, Abigail Hobbs is the worst, her cousin is Matthew Brown. Because stuff.

Notes

This 'episode' takes place a few weeks after the previous instalment. Once again I'm jumping ahead, just to write some Valentine's Day sweetness. In this AU Will has now been diagnosed and is being treated.

There's a storm still a coming.

Update... previous chapter/episode occurred maybe two weeks before this one. I went back and filled in!

You are the everything

'You know I'd have been just as happy staying in.'

'It is traditional'

'I guess. Where are we going anyway?'

'A Japanese restaurant that Chiyoh has recommended. They are creating a special menu for the evening'

'Really? That sounds improbable'

'How so?'

'Is it even a thing in Japan?'

'We should find out. Next year perhaps'

'That was smooth. So this year Italy and next year Japan?'

'Spring is a beautiful time in both countries'

'Alright then. I'll start learning some Japanese.'

'You know I am fluent?'

'Yeah Mr Renaissance man, I know, I'd still like to be able to order my own udon thanks all the same'

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The restaurant is unassuming from the outside but inside there are low tables and zaisu, screens, soft music and pretty, kawaii Valentine's themed decorations.

'Yeah. Ok. This is sweet. I like it' Will smiles at Hannibal as a server dressed in 'ninja' pyjama takes them to their reserved table

'I hoped so'

'Ok. Less of the smug face. Oh look'

Will points to a series of woodcut prints on the wall beside their table. They are in traditional style but of Godzilla and Mothra.

'Would you like one? They sell them through their website?'

'Really? I've a thing for Godzilla'

'Should I be jealous?'

'Of a ninety foot lizard? Probably not' he smiles though

'I recognise the fondness in the tone'

'Not just Godzilla then. There's a few. Did you see any cartoons when you were a child, did you even have a television?'

'For some of the time. Yes. I was in boarding school and there was a television there. The cartoon I most recall was a Czech one about a mole. Mischa was very fond of it too.'

Will smiles, just occasionally he finds out something new and unexpected from Hannibal. A mole. He'll look it up on YouTube.

The server brings over the special menu for the evening and they spend some time contemplating their choices. In the background there is the gentle hum of conversation from other diners. The screens mean that no one is in anyone else's line of sight. It gives the illusion of both intimacy and privacy.

Will isn't really listening to the words, just the cadence and tone, and music of a voice near by. A man's voice. And then a woman's voice, laughing. That he knows. Very well indeed.

Hannibal is about to say something when Will holds up a hand, puts a finger to his lips and then points in the direction the low voices are coming from. Hannibal looks at him quizzically, and then listens too. He smiles broadly, and Will can't help but do so as well. He leans over and knocks on the screen. The person on the other side slides it back.

'Will, lad! What are you doing, no, stupid question. Alright son. Hannibal'

'Beau. Hello. Beverly' Hannibal smiles at both of them,

Will groans, 'Tell me this wasn't planned'

'You're kidding right! I don't double date on Valentine's Day for anyone' Bev smirks at him and gets an eye roll in return.

'When did you fly in dad?'

'Yesterday'

'Ok. So when Bev was late for lab this morning...?'

'Beverly, did you have a meeting to go to?' Beau's tone is teasing and affectionate

Bev grins back at him, 'It was a tough choice, but someone had to make it'

'Unbelievable. I think maybe we'll slide the screen back now and try not to listen to anything you say'

'Back at you!' Bev sticks her tongue out at Will

'Oh this is just peachy'

Beau slides the screen back and Will and Hannibal hear both Beau and Bev laugh. They look at each other and then laugh also.

'I'm going to ask the server if we can move' Will waves at their ninja and he comes to enquire. Will explains and amid much amusement they are shifted to a currently empty table.

'Content?'

'Yeah. Not sure I could have concentrated knowing they were next door'

'On the food?'

'No, idiot. You. It's hard not to be swamped by people's feelings if I let them in. I'd rather be swamped by you'

'If there is any swamping to be done'

'I liked the Creature from the Black Lagoon too'

'A lizard kink perhaps?'

'I don't think so. Damn now that's in my brain. Thanks for that.'

Hannibal twinkles at him and their starter arrives. They spend a happy ten minutes or so, slurping and guzzling. Will grins. He hopes there will be plenty more of that tonight. He's about to say so when there's a chuckle from the table adjacent to theirs. Someone knocks and Will slides the screen back.

'You've got to be kidding me. Jimmy? Really? Did you know Bev is here too?'

'No? Straight up? With Beau? Nice one. Hey, hi Hannibal, happy St Valentine's Day'

'Thank you Jimmy, Frederick' they all smile at each other. Hannibal and Frederick don't see eye to eye about most things but they can agree that Jimmy is a fine sweet man.

'I feel like I want to stand up and ask if there's anyone else here from the FBI or the psychiatric profession'

'Aw Will. Don't be grumpy. It's funny really'

'Yeah you're right. It is. Brian's not here is he?'

'No, he's gone to some Italian place with those Opera people'

'That still working out?'

'Seems to be'

'Good for him. Gotta be better than Freddie?'

'Sure'

'What about Jack?'

'No he's gone to some low key affair at the day hospice Bella visits occasionally'

'Ok. That sounds a bit tough'

'He said he was sort of looking forwards to it. Everyone there would know the deal, no explanations needed, just a whole lot of love going round'

'He's a courageous man'

'Bella chose him for a reason'

'Ok, back to dinner now? See you Jimmy. Oh. Are you going to move?'

The server, now even more bemused moves Jimmy and Frederick to another table. Will keeps the screen open. He smiles at the server 'we'll close it when the next couple comes. As long as we don't know them either'

Fortunately they don't know the new couple and the screen is slid shut.

'That was'

'Ridiculous?'

'Utterly. Good food though'

The main course comes and they do the inelegant hot noodle shovel in your mouth thing

Hannibal allows, 'noodles wait for no man'

'Or woman, these are great. Wow. Do they do take-out here?'

'I believe so. Though it's a long way for you to come from Wolf Trap'

Will looks at Hannibal and pulls an envelope out of his inside jacket pocket and tosses it on the table in front of him.

'True. Alright then. About that. Open it'

'Will?'

'Go on. It won't bite'

Hannibal opens it, perhaps expecting a card. Inside there are instructions for a real estate agent, concerning the house in Wolf Trap. Hannibal takes out his glasses and reads it 'Will?'

'The commute is killing us. I miss you when you're not around. You don't have to decide this second. But let's talk about, you know, living in the same place'

'You'd sell the house in Wolf Trap'

'To be with you? Of course'

'Will'

'It's ok. You don't have to. Only when you're ready'

'I want to. I do want to. I hadn't thought you'd be willing'

'Mr Loner Isolated Empath Weirdo Six Dog Man willing to move in with his, what was the word? Intimate?'

'Six dogs is something of an...'

'Obstacle?'

'I was going to say, opportunity'

Will laughs 'ok. I'll bite. Opportunity?'

'To arrive at a mutually agreeable and creative solution'

'Smooth, Hannibal, smooth. So. Are you saying yes?'

'Yes, Will. Yes please' Hannibal finds himself almost speechless. Reduced from his usual eloquence to a stumbling fool. Will constantly does this to him.

'Ok then. Good. You know the whole decorations thing might be a bit of a challenge'

'You're not overly fond of my aesthetic?'

'Maybe lean less towards the whole macabre Edgar Allan Poe southern gothic thing?'

'Will?'

'Dark wood, horns, crushed velvet, paisley, antlers, taxidermy, somber colours, skulls, Hannibal, lots of skulls, Leda and the fucking Swan (I know it's Zeus, thanks for that), weaponry, Japanese erotica, (tentacle porn, that's what it is Hannibal, ten. tacle. oct. o. puss. porn) tassels, shall I go on?'

'I take your point. It did evolve though'

'Better than buying it in one go in Emo Ikea?'

'I'm not familiar?'

'It's a, oh, you know, never mind'

'Very well. We shall have to negotiate. I'm assuming you would prefer it if I too sold my house?'

'How would you feel about that?'

'Have you considered how we might incorporate Mischa into our discussion of this? It is her home too?'

'Err. Actually it was her idea'

'Indeed?'

'Yup'

'And her plan?'

'Both of us sell, we find somewhere new. We build or remodel an annexe. Done'

'As simple as that?'

'Apparently so'

'Does she see herself as a good fairy in this, casting benevolent wishes?'

'Hannibal, my love, if she does I'm not going to be the one to stamp on her tiara or break her wand. I doubt you are either'

Hannibal smiles. This is true. Though she mustn't get her way about everything in their lives. Just. Well it would be nice to indulge her when her wishes run parallel with his and Will's.

'Very well. When we return from Florence'

Will grins 'excellent. Thank you Hannibal.'

'That seems to have been remarkably easy'

'Surprised?'

'A little'

'Would you like there to be more drama? Haven't you had enough drama to last a life time?'

'You're right of course. Perhaps that is why. The drama of the last seven months has been overwhelming at times. It seems unusual to be enjoying a period of calm.'

'You know if you say that there's likely to be an instant drop of bodies don't you?'

'I am not so superstitious'

'Uh huh. Good luck with that. I wasn't until bloody Tosca'

Hannibal grimaces, the opera preceded two weeks of misery for them both. Will reaches over and takes his hand 'we're ok now, better than ok. I almost feel normal. Well, what passes for normal with me.'

He's about to say more when his cell goes. A few tables away another cell rings, and then a third. He looks at Hannibal 'not superstitious right?'

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'I thought it was kind of cute of them' Jimmy volunteers,

'What? Our abandoned lovers eating dessert, drinking wine, or coffee, or some weird Japanese alcohol, and bemoaning their desertion together?' Will rolls his eyes,

'Yeah. Sweet.' Bev grins,

'You know Hannibal and Frederick don't really get on'

'They've got Jimmy in common now, Will, it'll be fine'

'Beau gets on with Hannibal doesn't he?'

'He does. Why do you think I look so worried'

'I thought that was because you had to leave half way through Valentine's dinner'

'Yeah that too. And that I'd just asked Hannibal to move in with me'

'Wow. Really. That's great. Hang on what did he say?'

'He said yes'

'As a grown man I don't care if this comes out wrong but "squeee" Go Hannigram'

'That's the portmanteau is it?'

'Bev came up with it.'

'Did she now?' Will side eyes Bev doing his best meangirlz look.

'I've tried to do one for her, you know Beverbeau, katzham, Bevergram, Bevham. Not so easy'

'Yeah. Alright. Where are we going?'

'Jack told you'

'I didn't listen to a word he said, it was enough that he rung. Shit. I've just realised I haven't got my meds with me'

'Can you miss a dose?'

'Maybe, I've missed one this evening already, they did say I'd relapse if I missed more than a few doses. Shit shit shit. Hannibal will kill me'

Bev and Jimmy look at him. 'Maybe we can get a script faxed to you or something?'

'I am an idiot. I've got meds at his house and mine. I just didn't think I'd, oh bugger bugger bugger'

'Hey, babe we'll get you a new script in the morning. It's ok. Don't worry'

'I know. I'm just forgetful. And yeah both the encephalitis and the drugs make me forgetful'

'We'll help you remember tomorrow'

'Yeah? Thanks. I'm going to have to tell Hannibal aren't I. Oh god. That's not going to go well'

'He loves you Will'

'I know. And right this moment that's not comforting. Well it is, but.. you know'

The FBI cruiser continues smoothly on. None of them are driving, Will can't because of the meds he's supposed to be on, Bev and Jimmy because they drank just a teeny bit too much of the nice plum wine and saki at the restaurant. They're heading for Greenwood Delaware. It's not an impossible drive, just 90 miles or so from Baltimore. Maybe two hours. Given the roads and that it's February and a touch icy.

When they arrive Brian is there stamping his feet in the cold, Jack is talking to someone from the local PD. Neither of them look delighted to be out in the February cold. And drizzle. Lucky them.

Bev is aware that Will has been getting more anxious and not less the closer they've got to their destination. She puts it down to him forgetting the meds, not taking his last dose, the prospect of telling Hannibal, and maybe the annoyance of having to leave what should have been a lovely evening.

She's a bit miffed too. Beau is only staying for another day and then has to go back for some work contract or other. She could fly out to him, meet Will's siblings. And she'll just veer sharply away from that thought. Will's sister had a lot to say about Beau seeing someone only slightly older than her apparently. La la la, not thinking about that at all. She hasn't told Will. Hey maybe they could go together, that would definitely work (not). Hey bring Hannibal too. One for all and all for one! She sees Jack beckoning to them both,

'Right then. You on, geisha boy?'

'Wait, how did you..'

Bev looks at him and her whole face breaks into a huge shit eating grin 'oh my gods, Will Graham. You are such a tart. I was just being funny! Oh wow. Does Hannibal know? Was it a Valentine's surprise? Wow I did not know someone could go as red as that!'

'Shut up already. And don't you dare breathe a word'

'I would never kink shame you!'

'Yeah?'

'Well, not unless Hannibal was here too. You know I'm going to want details don't you?'

'I don't ask you about dad'

'Hey. You wanna know, big boy? What daddy likes?'

'Bev. Oh my god. Stop. Please. Oh god. My poor brain. It's been on fire you know. That's not helping. That's as bad as Hannibal and the lizard kink, no Jack please don't ask. It's too much'

Will fans his face with his hands 'can men get hot flushes? I've got one. For sure. Or it's the bloody illness'

'Are you two finished? Will come on. I'm desperate to go home'

'Yeah sure. Sorry Jack'

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'Is Hannibal meeting him off the flight?'

'Yeah. It's a straight shot. Hardly any time in the air. He should be ok'

'I wish one of us could go with him'

'Agent Phillips is ok you know'

'I know, I just feel like I've abandoned him.'

'Did you not just wave to him as he went up the plane staircase thing?'

'Yeah. I guess'

'And lo, has he not just texted you?'

'Yeah. That too.'

'Is this to do with Beau?'

'No of course not. Maybe. I dunno. Yes? I dunno.'

'Who are you and what have you done with Beverly Katz?'

'I know. It's weird. I always felt protective and now it's just..'

'It's ok, honey. It's gotta be weird. Your best friend's dad? Psychiatrists make whole livings off that!'

'Lawyers too!'

'Not helping Jimmy'

'Did you tell Hannibal to bring his meds'

'Do I look like an idiot? Yes. I told him. And made it sound completely understandable Will didn't take them out with him to a nice Valentine's evening dinner with his cutie.'

'Did you actually call Hannibal Lecter a cutie?'

'I was going to, if he hadn't done his rumbly scarey thunder god thing'

'Good enough'

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'Will. We're home. Come inside love'

'Sorry Hannibal. Not really asleep. Thanks for getting me. And the meds. Sorry about last night'

'My sweet William. Come along now. I won't carry you. You're too heavy for that'

'Wretch'

'Of course'

Will allows himself to be pulled from the car. Back in Delaware Will had completely lost it at the scene and rather than simply collapsing he'd contaminated it badly. If it wasn't for the fact that he'd terrified himself and his co-workers and friends several people would have been very pissed off indeed. Even Jack had seemed more concerned for Will than for the integrity of the scene.

Indoors Hannibal brings Will into the kitchen, he takes the bag of clothes that Will brought back with him, covered in the victim's blood, and removes them to the laundry room. As he's doing so Mischa comes downstairs 'is he alright?' Hannibal doesn't say anything, if Mischa is to live as part of a house that he and Will share then she may also need to understand what his work calls out of him.

He sighs, 'Come with me. You can find out. He is tired now. But he collapsed at the scene, it was one of his worst experiences by the sound of it. When I spoke to Beverly she sounded almost hysterical. I think his father is torn between being here for Will and driving to Delaware for Beverly.'

'Where is he now?'

'Currently at Beverly's apartment until he can decide' he holds out a hand to Mischa, 'don't be scared, he looks as ever, just rather subdued' Mischa grasps her brother's hand and follows him into the kitchen.

'Will. Hello. My dear friend' She hovers near by, not wanting to touch him in case it makes it worse. She's heard that he can become hyper-sensitive sometimes, so that even a simple touch is overwhelming.

'Hey Mischa. Sorry about this' Will is sitting on one of the stools next to the kitchen island.

'I thought it was the encephalitis that made it worse?'

'Probably didn't help, but it can be bad anyway. Sorry. I'll be a bit wobbly today and maybe tomorrow. I also missed one of my med's doses and was a bit late with the other'

'Was it very bad?'

'It wasn't great. Someone died.'

'I'm sorry Will. I know it's part of the work you do. Even if it's not your proper job'

'Yeah. Teacher with a badge and gun, I had to give Bev my gun, the US Marshall didn't want it on the flight. Can't say I blame him'

'Will I'm going to make some tea and something for you to eat. I brought some things from the restaurant. Would you like to eat something sweet?'

'We were at the restaurant just what, eight hours ago? Feels like a lifetime. Yes please to something sweet. And tea. Thank you.'

Hannibal retrieves a bag from the fridge and replates some assorted mochi and other small cakes and buns. Will smiles at them. They are all heart shaped. Hannibal adds some small foil wrapped heart shaped chocolates to the plate. An accent of bright colour amongst the muted shades.

'Chocolate hearts?'

'For you my love'

Will smiles tiredly but gratefully 'I'd be glad to share'.

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Really, the everything

Chapter Summary

Freddie, Mischa and Bev go shopping (it's coat sales)
Abigail is plotting (off stage but we know all about it)
Hannibal is flopping (he's a bit under the weather)
Jack is dropping (hints)
Will is just being as Will-ish as possible cos nothing rhymes with opping and otting that fits? Rotting? Mopping?

'Will? Someone for you. I'll bring some coffee'

'Thanks Hannibal' Will pushes himself up to more of a sitting position on the sofa in the small library. He's not altogether surprised to see Jack, but Paul Krendler too?

'Hey Jack, Agent Krendler, I'm slightly surprised to see you both. Hannibal's bringing coffee do you want some? Can he sit in on this?'

'Call me Paul, Will. For now this is as informal as we get. We want to have an off the record conversation with both you and Dr Lecter if he's amenable'

'Ok. Well. I won't speak for Hannibal, but to do with what? If it's about me in the field and this thing in Delaware I'm not supposed to even leave this couch!'

'No, no, Will' Jack holds his hands out in a gesture of appeasement 'no, we realise that's out of the question at the moment. No. it's about the Hobbs' girl.

'Everything's about her it feels. I'm up for it. Probably. I'll say if I start to over stress, try not to do a feeling dump.'

'A feeling dump?'

'Yeah. It's when there's so much stuff going on that you just dump all your feelings into whatever you're saying. It's like the opposite of an energy vampire? When someone just sucks up all the emotion and energy in a situation, like a black hole? So, I'd just encourage you not to dump because that goes a long way to making me useless as a conversationalist, or rational human being'

he smiles at them, Jack is notorious for throwing everything he's got into everything he does. And for Will that's pretty exhausting to be around. Paul Krendler plays things close to his chest, but he's been known to telegraph his impatience with those Agents he feels can't keep up.

Hannibal comes back in with a large tray, bearing a French Press, four cups with saucers and all the usual coffee paraphernalia.

'Jack, Agent Krendler please, help yourselves, there's a little hazelnut in this creamer if you prefer. Now, am I here for this conversation or shall I find something else to occupy myself for the next hour?'

'Are you taking time off work Hannibal?'

'No, this happens to be a day when I had earlies this morning and so I'm now home for the afternoon and evening. So, go or stay?'

'We'd like you to stay if you would'

Will shifts his feet so that Hannibal can sit on the end of the couch, he wraps both of Will's socked feet in one hand and moves them back onto his lap, pulling the light blanket back over Will as he does so, he passes a cup to Will, they smile easily at one another.

'We wanted to talk to you about Abigail Hobbs. You know Matthew Brown was arrested and then released on bail?'

Will and Hannibal nod. Freddie Lounds had this information before Matthew had even hit the street.

'Has Abigail recanted?'

'No. Mr Brown is still out on bail. The issue is the evidence. You probably know one of the other residents of Port Haven claimed Abigail was hiding things. The search has thrown up plenty of material'

at this point Agent Krendler glances at Jack who takes over

'we now think this was a scam, either a distraction, a diversion, something of that sort, she might have put the girl up to it, or bribed her. She claims it was because she was worried people might take things from her, maybe even sell them, so she hid her own possessions'

'What about the storage-unit? The one you were going to have me look at?'

'Antlers and pelts'

'Antlers and pelts? Nothing else?'

'Not a thing. Been through it with a fine-tooth comb. Antlers and Pelts. Abigail claims she's going to sell them on eBay or Etsy or something. Wanted it under a different name to avoid the notoriety and so on'

'This sounds as though what at first looked promising has proved to be utterly useless. But it has taken several weeks to ascertain this?'

'Yup, used up lots of resources and person hours. Lots of worry, over nothing'

'So, the only evidence that remains?'

'Found here in this house, and, in your car Dr Lecter. And the fishing flies in your house Will'

'So, why did she accuse her cousin?'

'That's still not clear. Do you have any ideas about that?'

'The only thing we've been able to come up with is that she wants him out of the way, either as an alibi for him, or she's worried he'll be obstructive'

'That's pretty much what Jack and I think too. We can't act on the actual evidence until one or two other aspects are cleared up. We wondered if you'd both be willing to put your own timelines together around the death of the two girls in writing for us. It'd help us discount you. I've seen the timeline around Christmas when you think the flies might have been placed. It is tight but it's manageable, for them I mean.'

'Of course. We'd anticipated we might have to account for our whereabouts if the issue became germane to the investigation. We could do that later and send it to you by email? Would that be acceptable?'

'Completely. Thank you. There's something else I'm afraid'

Will looks at Agent Krendler and then at Jack 'that doesn't sound so good'

'Abigail says she noticed blood on your coat sleeve Hannibal when you came to see her at Port Haven for a therapy session. It's not on any of the coats we've got in evidence at the moment. She's given me a description. I'm afraid we're going to have to take it. Brown herringbone tweed or wool with a darker contrasting collar?'

Hannibal blinks in surprise 'oh. Certainly. Do you need to come with me to fetch it? Of course you do. Please, Agent Krendler, I think it's in my dressing room upstairs. Will do you want me to fetch anything whilst we're there'

'Blue jumper if it's handy Hannibal, I think it's over the back of the desk chair'

When Hannibal and Agent Krendler have left the room Will looks hard at Jack Crawford

'Jack? What's going on?'

Jack glances to the stairs and lowers his voice

'I'm concerned that Abigail is intent on setting up either Hannibal or you or both of you. At the moment it's leaning towards Hannibal. And you were right, he is the more vulnerable. Have you spoken to Alana Bloom recently?'

'Is she throwing her two penn'orth into this? Shit Jack. She was here a few weeks ago, there was an argument'

'I know. She told me all about it. She's conflicted Will. But not for reasons I'm happy with. This thing with his sister, you know the backstory?'

'I do. Mischa is actually here. If you wanted to and both she and Hannibal were ok with it you could talk to her'

'I don't think we need to do so yet. But Alana wasn't very complimentary'

'What? Why?'

'She said she was manipulative and aggressive. And that now she knows the history she suspects there's more to the situation than is apparent'

'Alana said this? What on earth?'

'I shouldn't be telling you. But I think Dr Bloom has been blinded by what she thinks is her professional duty and the application of her own therapeutic approach. She doesn't want to be wrong about Abigail Hobbs. She's invested time and effort, she has a stake in the outcome now.'

'So do we!'

'Which is why I'm telling you. Off the record. Paul knows I'm telling you, he's not happy either, with the situation or with Alana. But if your timelines for the deaths are flabby I'm afraid Hannibal in particular is vulnerable to being charged'

'You're kidding me? What? With murder! Or, for framing me? Or what? Fucking hell Jack. Sorry. Sorry. I'm going to take some deep breaths, fuck'

'Shit. Will, sorry. Can I get you something? Shit. I'll get Hannibal'

Will waves at him urgently 'no don't, look, sorry, grab my hand and pinch between thumb and forefinger. It's an acupressure point. Helps with migraines and other brain shit. Ok, ouch. Good. Don't talk. Bit harder. Ouch. Ok. Ok. Ok.'

He exhales a long anxious breath, and he and Jack can hear Hannibal and Paul coming down the stairs.

'Don't say anything. I'll tell Hannibal later. Ok?'

'Am I going to tell him I just put your recovery back a week? Do I look stupid?'

Will laughs shakily and Jack sits back in his own seat and then with a slight shake to his own hand pours both himself and Will another coffee.

When Agent Krendler and Hannibal return Hannibal looks sharply at Will

'Here's the jumper, not quite where you said it was. Are you alright? You're flushed'

he stretches out a hand and feels Will's forehead with the back of it, 'a little warm. Gentlemen I fear we may need to either cut this short or speak only of trivial matters'

'We shouldn't take up any more of your time. It's been helpful. Thank you. For the cooperation'

'And the coffee'

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'Are you going to tell him what Jack said?'

'Yeah dad. I am. It wouldn't be fair not to. It's crap though. And I think it might destroy his and Alana's friendship, completely'

'That's a shame. She seemed all right'

'I think she feels let down'

'Does she now?'

'Bev's talked to you hasn't she?'

'She has. She'll be here in an hour or so. She was in court today'

'Good. I haven't seen her since, oh. Two nights ago, when I scared the shit out of her. Did she have to go straight to court? From the scene?'

'Yep. She thought the smell probably added to the expert bit of the witness. Added verisimilitude to what she said and the slides she had'

'God, I'm sorry she had to go straight to it'

'Nah. It's ok. Said it gave her something to focus on. It was a messy scene even before you! You just added to the fun'

'She said that didn't she?'

'Words to that effect. Hey Hannibal. Have you sat down today or has Will had you running around playing nursemaid? Thanks'

Beau accepts a mug of tea which Hannibal has brought in on a tray along with biscuits and small cakes

'It's not annoyed me yet, or rather Will hasn't'

'Ahh. Sounds like your guests might have'

'Will covered very well but Jack certainly said something to him that upset him'

Beau grins at Will who shrugs as if to say 'yeah yeah so he can read my best poker face'

'Alright then, Jack used the minute when you were out of the room to tell me that Alana is firmly footed on Abigail's side, if there is a side. Jack and Paul currently think she's wrong. But the evidence is starting to weigh against either of us or both of us'

'Or more specifically me. If the coat is being counted in the balance?'

'Possibly. Probably. I got a bit upset'

'Of course you did. Thank you. But not necessary. I am confident right will prevail. Eventually'

'It's the eventually bit that worries me'

'Beau, when will Beverly get here. You are both staying to eat aren't you?'

'Do you mind? It would be good. She's had a tough few days'

'Not at all. Mischa will be pleased to see her. I'd be grateful if we didn't talk about Abigail to Mischa. I can't tell yet if she's over-interested or bothered by it, so I'd like to not worry her if we can avoid it'

'Seriously Hannibal, what will you do?'

'Beau, I've already spoken to my lawyer. He managed the paperwork when Mischa came here from Lithuania. He's considering what the ramifications might be if I'm either charged or detained, especially if I don't get bail. Which I might not as I might be considered a flight risk with considerable accessible disposable income. The nature of Mischa's residency means she must have two, well, in effect guarantors. He suggested I ask Will, if he's willing. Though we may have to see if he is charged as well. In which case he suggested I ask you Beau.'

'Bloody hell. You've thought this through!'

'Hannibal, when did you speak to Charles?'

'When Freddie told us Matthew Brown was released. She was worried about Mischa. I agreed with her, we wanted to make sure Mischa would be protected. I had meant to speak to you both about it before'

'Ok. Firstly, yes of course I'll be her second, is Chiyoh the other? And yeah, it does make sense to have a back up. Dad, you on board, oh and thirdly, Freddie? Really?'

'Sure. Of course. Hannibal does Mischa need to agree too?'

'She doesn't. But I have asked her already, and I know Freddie seems an unlikely ally, but her sense of, I suppose a kind of moral outrage, which is what in part fuels her particular brand of journalism, means she feels very protective of Mischa. I am not above using that to help protect either Mischa or you'

'Ok. Then. Wow. Do we have to sign things?'

'Charles is drawing them up. It means I shall also be giving you power over my various assets and accounts, in the interests of there being someone to look after matters if it all goes bad'

'Hannibal. I see why you want to do that for practical reasons but, really' Will glances at his dad,

Beau notices 'what? Oh you want to have a private conversation? And you can't get up? Oh dear. What a shame then. You'll just have to put up with me eavesdropping shamelessly'

'Dad'

'Sorry lad. All for one, and one for all. You wanted me in, I'm in. Be a bit plainer. I can't always follow when you two get a language-y on me.'

'Ok. I'm saying you should only give me secondary authority over your accounts and stuff, and make your lawyer the subsidiary signee. Basically so I can't rob you blind'

'Will. At some point this year we will both be selling our current homes and buying somewhere new, together. Our finances will be intricately linked then, this is merely anticipating that by a few months'

'Will? House? Alright then. What don't I know?'

'Ahh. I'm sorry Will. I assumed you'd told Beau, or possibly asked his advice'

'Nope. Ok dad. I asked Hannibal to live with me. And yes, recently'

'Aww lad. On Valentine's Day? That's very sweet. I brought up a gentleman after all. Does Mischa know yet? What does she say'

'It was her idea'

'God I love this family. It was her idea? Fantastic! And you said yes Hannibal? Let me just check, your licence hasn't been revoked has it? Actually sorry, that's not very tactful. What will happen if you are charged?'

'One hopes only a temporary suspension of my licence to practice. Although strangely enough the law is sufficiently quirky that I could return to surgery. I won't but I could'

'Outstanding, they'd let you inside a persons' body but not their head?'

'Exactly'

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'Dinner was great. Thank you. Are you going to sit down now?'

'Yes. Thank you. Lift your feet. Better? Good' Hannibal let's out a long slow breath. Beau and Beverly have gone to her apartment. Mischa has returned to her floor of the house. It is just the two of them.

'Hannibal? You know I'm willing to be a third guarantor for Mischa in case anything happens to either you or Chiyoh, don't you? Dad too. I think Mischa is easier to manage than Missy anyway'

'Missy?'

'My sister. Be glad you haven't had to meet her yet. She had a bit of a go at Bev on the phone last week'

'I don't believe I knew that. Beau hasn't said anything'

'Dad doesn't know. I think. Missy got Bev's number from Dad's desk address book. Except it wasn't Bev's number as such, it was her mom's, in case of an emergency. Missy talked to Bev's mom. She got Bev's number from her. If that's your face going ouch you're not wrong. Bev threw a few things round the lab. Jimmy lent her his stress ball, don't ask, she tried to eat it'

'Oh dear. I'm surprised Missy hasn't phoned here then'

'She did. She got me. She wasn't expecting that'

'She didn't know you are staying here?'

'Nope. It was a full and frank exchange of views'

'Indeed?'

'I told her to fuck off'

'In those terms?'

'No, I actually said she could really fuck the fuck off, and leave dad and Bev out of it'

'Will they put pressure on Beau if either of us are charged?'

'She might. But I reckon he'll let most of it wash over him. Though he'd probably go into bat for you or Mischa or Bev if it came to it'

'Not you?'

'If I'm charged Missy will have a fit but she'll then do the whole southern family loyalty thing. It'd be very annoying but unfortunately possibly a tad effective. She'd give Freddie some great material'

'But you haven't seen her for more than 20 years?'

'That does not stop Missy from having an opinion'

'I see'

'It's why I think you've drawn pretty well every short straw in this relationship! Sisters, you win, Obscure title and ancestry, you win. Cosmopole, you win. Social standing, you definitely win. Universally admired and appreciated, still winning. Financial standing, you win (though I'm ok thanks), I don't know? What did I forget? We've both got good friends. Oh. Yes. That reminds me. I want to know if you want to know something about Alana that might annoy you?'

'Perhaps not this evening. I'm a little tired'

'Hannibal? Are you not well? Lean this way a bit so I can feel your forehead? You're quite warm. Where's the thermometer? No, don't, I can walk there and back'

Will goes out of the library and to the downstairs bathroom. It's still waiting to be re-tiled since the evidence crew took the floor up. Will finds the thermometer in the small medicine cabinet and brings it back to the library. Hannibal is sitting with his head resting back against a throw pillow against the back of the couch.

'Alright then, under the tongue and don't talk'

A minute later he pulls it out and squints 'I can never read these, what does it say, and don't lie, I'll know'

Hannibal takes it from him 'just under a 100. That explains the tiredness'

'Have you got patients tomorrow?'

'No. Though I have a session with Bedelia myself in the later afternoon'

'Ok. Good. If you're ok at lunchtime tomorrow you'll be able to go, let her know this evening you might not be able to'

'Will?'

'I can't believe you'd disagree with me over this. You won't will you? I'll be careful not to overdo it, but you're not flummerying around tomorrow. What had you planned?'

'A visit to the museum, they've a new exhibit?'

'Nope. Try again'

'There's a lunchtime concert at the Cathedral. There's parking just outside'

'Nuh.uh. Again?'

'Sitting at home possibly reading a book, with my feet up whilst someone else occasionally brings tea?'

'Bingo'

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'Mischa honey what about this one?'

'That's nice Freddie. You look pretty. Beverly what do you think?'

'I think I'm crazy to be coat shopping with you two when it's this cold and I need a hot drink. Did I mention I was at a scene for three days this week! And two days in court. Please can we sit down somewhere warm. Have they switched the heating off in here?'

'Beverly. It's because you don't have a warm enough coat. That's why you always get cold. We're all going to have a new coat. I asked Hannibal. He agreed. Freddie I think the jade is perfect. Beverly this red one? Try it'

Beverly rolls her eyes and takes the long red wool coat, its flared at the bottom and the sleeves flare too. There's a sort of stand up collar which she can button or leave open. It does look good on her. She practices doing a swishy walk along the shop floor. Freddie gives her an ironic smile and claps. Bev replies with a little bow.

'Alright. I'm in. What's the tag say. $900 you've got to be kidding me! I'm not spending that on a coat!'

'You're right you're not. It's a birthday present.

'It's not your birthday is it? It's not mine for sure?'

'No. it's just that whenever I say I shouldn't get something Hannibal just says think of it as the birthday present you were meant to get'

'What? He can't buy me a coat!'

'Why not? And anyway he isn't, I am, you can buy the tea and cakes please I don't actually have any cash'

'What? Oh gods, do you have an account here?'

'Of course. The nice lady is just waiting for you to decide. We should decide soon so she can go on her lunch break. It should have started five minutes ago. She's too polite to say. If it makes you feel better all the sale staff get a 5% commission so between us we'd get her an extra $130 I expect she'd like that. More if we have the scarves too. Do let's!'

Beverly looks at Freddie who is doing her 'it's all crazy but let's not look too closely' face, so the three of them take their coats to the sales woman who is indeed pleased. Especially when Mischa adds scarves, hats and finally the softest deerskin gloves in toning shades for each of them. The woman's commission goes up by $40 in the blink of a till register.

Mischa makes them all put their current coats into the glossy bags the shop provides and suddenly they look glamorous and elegant. For Bev this is a nice change, normally it's all jeans and formaldehyde. For Freddie it's a slightly more sophisticated look, and Mischa suddenly looks like a Russian snow princess.

They head to a tea house and then wolf their way through tiny meringue macaron, eclairs, crustless sandwiches and scones with jam and clotted cream. The three of them sit in the low chesterfield sofas and Mischa encourages Freddie to take selfies of the three of them, all squeezed together.

Will picks up his cell and opens the file and turns it to show Hannibal

'They look very happy. It's nice of Freddie to do this for Mischa'

'Yes. I think so. It may be good for both of them. Chiyoh will go with them next time'

'Ok. That's going to be interesting. The four of them?'

'I believe so. They are going to a sushi bar and karaoke'

'Really? Wow. Does Mischa speak Japanese?'

'She does. She and Chiyoh mainly speak to each other in Japanese. English is her fourth language. She is not quite so adept in it'

'Ok. So Lithuanian, Japanese, I'll guess some Russian just because of her age, and English. No French? Oh. Probably not'

'Not much. She was incarcerated at the time when she would have learnt French if we had been together, she has learnt some since. Chiyoh isn't fluent but her French is adequate'

'You've reminded me about Valerie and Jean-Pierre. Shall we try and fix to have dinner with them. I mentioned them a while ago. My vet and his husband, the lumberjack? Oh, did you meet them? Jean-Pierre was mounting all the flies for me in a frame, one of those shadow box things. No you didn't meet them. Some of it's a bit hazy.'

'Do ask them. Shall we meet them in Wolf Trap? It would save them a drive into the city?'

'Nice idea. How about I hold off on actually fixing the exact date until you're better and I'm less crazy? No. I know I'm not crazy. Just still recovering. I know five more months. Longer if I push it. I do know. Honestly'

'I'd be glad to meet some of your non work friends, we won't be able to talk blood spatter and gore'

'No, true, but Jean-Pierre can go quite a long way on insects. We can get pretty technical sometimes. And Val can bore for Canada on fly fishing, he makes me look positively restrained'

'Remarkable. I feel I must meet them at once. If they can both give you a run for your money on your specialist subjects, it will be an enlightening evening full of..'

He doesn't finish his sentence as he fends off a cushion thrown at him from the far end of the couch.

'I'd thank you to remember I am under the weather'

'You and me both mister'

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The sweetest thing

Chapter Summary

> Finally Will makes a good decision, with no pressure from anyone else. Why? Because something very bad nearly happens.

'Hey! Hey! If you can hear me, you're alive, you're alive. This is Greenwood Delaware it's past 11:00pm and you're alive. I promise you'

'Will? Will? Are you awake? Are you? Will? Where are you?'

'Mischa? What the... where are we? What happened? Shit I'm sorry'

'It's alright. You're alright. So am I. Let's go back to the car.'

Mischa takes Will's hand carefully and he follows her closely through the scrubby wood back to his car. Twigs and branches occasionally catch one or both of them. There's just enough light from the moon to see their way. It's only a few minutes walk but Will has no idea how they got here.

Once at the car he pulls out the emergency blanket from the trunk and puts it around Mischa who is only wearing a cardigan over slacks and a shirt. At least she's got proper shoes on.

'Let's get in. Put the heater on Will. That's better, thank you'

'Ok. This is bad isn't it? What happened'

'I think we should phone Hannibal first, in case he's got home and we're not there, if you call him I'll speak to him'

'Ok. I should call Beverly too. There was someone here wasn't there?'

'There was. She was quite scared. She couldn't really say very much. But she did hold my hand. I think you were sort of waking up then and she ran away'

'Mischa. Oh gods. I feel so bad about this. Hannibal will go ape'

'He'll be glad we're both alright. And I chose to come'

'Oh? What? Ok. Ok. I'll call Bev first..... Bev? It's Will. I know. I'm sorry, I know. Ok, you know the house in Greenwood? There's someone here? I know. Yes. In Greenwood. I know. No I'm not. I'm here with Mischa. I have no idea. Nope. No. I'm going to. Yeah right now. Ok. Thanks Bev. Sorry.... ok, she's going to come ... right, Hannibal'

Will finds the icon and presses it and hands the cell to Mischa

'Hannibal? Hello. This is Mischa. Yes. I know. I'm with him. Where are you? Oh I see. It was a little bit of an accident. No neither of us are hurt at all. We're in a place called Greenwood. It's a nice house. The woods are lovely. No. no. No, we're in the car. We're quite warm. We called Bev. She was here before. Will says she needs to come out here. There was a nice lady. She's a bit scared. No. she ran away. I thinks she's hiding. Alright. Are you sure? She might be cold? Alright. Yes I will. Of course. Are you going to phone Beverly? Oh. That's a good idea. I'm sure he won't mind. He's very nice too. Alright. Can you bring a hot drink for Will? He's alright. No he doesn't know yet, I'll tell him. Yes. It was my choice. No, not one bit. I don't lie to you Hannibal. I wouldn't. Alright. Of course. I love you too. Yes, Will too'

Mischa smiles at the phone as though Hannibal could see and she passes it back to Will

'He's with his colleagues in a bar. He's going to call Brian and Beverly to see if they can come together so someone can drive your car home. He's going to come too, obviously. He's not cross. Well, maybe a teeny tiny bit. But not with us. More like the situation. I think he'd like to bite it'

'What? Sorry. I'm a bit disoriented. What happened?'

'Hannibal went to a board meeting in the city. We were in the library just reading. I think you fell asleep. You looked very tired. Then you got up and went to the hall and put your coat on and just walked out of the house. Just like that. I didn't think you should go on your own so I followed you. I just had time to pick up my shoes, I put them on in the car. Because you've a clicky thing it unlocked all the doors, I just got in the passenger seat. I did put my belt on. I don't normally sit in the front, it's a bit too much. I didn't talk to you. I think you needed to be quiet. I'm not sure. I wasn't scared. Your driving was fine'

'I drove us here? From Baltimore? Gods I need to be chained up!'

'I know. Maybe not actual chains, but something. I might not be able to come next time'

'Oh Mischa. I'm sorry. I thought I'd be better now. Or not better, but improved?'

'I know Will. I'm sorry too. When Hannibal comes he won't know which of us to look after, I'm just warning you. It will make him flustered. It might seem like he's cross. He's not. It's just not quite under his control. And he doesn't like that. Not one bit'

'What happened when we got here?'

'Oh. We went into the house. It's nice inside. You walked around a bit looking at things I think. When we were in the bedroom you looked under the bed. The lady was hiding there. She came out and I think she was frightened to see you. She couldn't really say anything. You sort of tried to hold her hand but her glove came off. And she was going to run away and she saw me. She gave me her other glove too. I put them on the dressing table. She'll want them I expect. She ran away then and you followed her and I followed you'

'Did I just wake up? What happened next?'

'You did! It was funny. You started calling her, telling her she was alive! I think she's a sort of ghost isn't she? Or she wants to be? I don't know. You have a difficult job don't you? Do you need to be a bit quiet now? I could hold your hand if you like? I think it helps when Hannibal does that sometimes'

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Hannibal looks down at Will, asleep now in what Hannibal now automatically thinks of as their bed. What a truly dreadful evening. Maybe he will have to cut back on his extra-curricula activities? Both Mischa and Will were so apologetic. And Hannibal can't find fault with either of them really. It is not surprising that the stress of the situation they are in combined with the recent murder has overtaxed Will, still at a finely balanced stage of recovery. This may possibly have put him back a few weeks.

Hannibal sighs to himself, he should encourage Will to talk to Donald again. And Mischa did what she did out of love, and if she didn't know that she was putting herself in danger that's hardly surprising. They've tried to keep the extent of Will's trauma and work from her. Beverly had been faintly horrified when it turned out the gloves Mischa thought she'd tidied up were actually the first few layers of dermis sloughing off from the woman's hands and arms. She impressed on Hannibal the need not to say this to Mischa. She hadn't needed to tell him. He grimaces at the thought.

Hannibal settles back down into the bed. As he turns on his side Will, still fast asleep wiggles closer to fit round him. He always does. What can they do? Will had joked about a straitjacket last time. But the encephalitis wasn't being treated then. He reaches out and switches off the light, Will murmurs something in his sleep. Hannibal tips his head closer to hear. 'Cos s'love you right?'

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'Hannibal? Rust talked about this. He said always two or more of us in one place. Donald I'm sorry, you know there are a couple of cases hanging over us? It's been suggested that we need to ensure we have some form of alibi going forwards. If I'm in hospital it will mean Hannibal is vulnerable'

'I understand Will, but as far as you're concerned you should be there now. I'm not happy with the last scan or that your core temperature has gone up again. The last two field related incidents should warn us too. You both need to plan on you being in hospital for two weeks minimum.'

Will and Hannibal look at each other in utter dismay. Apart from the case related issues that's a long time to once again be forced apart. Will takes a long deep breath.

'Ok Donald fair enough. I'll go in tomorrow, there's stuff I'll need to sort out today, that we'll need to talk about. I'd like you to draft a letter in support of an application for illness based severance from the FBI. I'm going to try and stay on at the Academy, it's the field work that affects me so badly. Enough's enough. I've got three months notice for Jack, and if I have to be on sick leave for most of it, that's what I'll do.'

Hannibal looks at him in surprise 'Will? I didn't know you'd reached that point? We haven't talked about it recently in except in the briefest terms'

'I could have killed Mischa or caused her to be hurt. That's it. I'm done. And yeah I could have killed myself too, but Mischa kind of underlines it for me. It's not only the encephalitis, sure that makes it worse, but at base the field work is just incredibly bad for me. You keep fixing me and I just go out and make it all worse again. It's not fair on you, it's not fair on our friends, dad hates it. And I said to Bev that if I was still standing six months in I'd stop. So I'll stop. It hasn't killed me yet, but last night was too close. We'll sort everything tonight and I'll go back into hospital tomorrow. Jack can hate me. But I'm done.'

On the drive back to Baltimore they are both quieter, Hannibal probably because he is surprised by the turn of events. He had assumed he would either have to make the case rather forcefully, effectively threaten Will. Or that he might be compelled to re-negotiate their relationship in some quite profound ways.

Will though is quiet because he's making a mental list of all the things he needs to do. He gets out his notepad and pen and makes a start:-

Call dad
Write letter to Jack - email it - drink tea - call him - drink strong cup of coffee
Call/text Rust
Call Paul Krendler
Call kennels
Cal Val and Jean-pierre
Wolf Trap - books, empty fridge, check laundry, clothes, laptop
Charles?
Chiyoh?
Bev, Z and Jimmy

'Ok Hannibal, I've made a list can I read it to you and see if you agree or if I'm missing anything major'

'Yes, please do. I think I am still suffering a little from shock'

'Yeah, I'm not surprised. Sorry to spring it on you. I've been thinking about it since that thing at a Grafton. I know I've resisted before. I honestly thought it was the encephalitis making it so much worse. But I don't think that now. I mentioned it to dad, we've talked about it off and on. He's emphasised that he thinks it's especially unfair to make you carry the can. If the academy will keep me on my finances will be fine. They were before. Even if they don't, industrial related severance will pay off the liens and mortgage. I get enough from the publications and online stuff to cover the basics. The finances will be ok'

'Will, you can't think I would let you want for anything?'

'You're sweet. I'm just telling you I've thought it through. If we decide to go ahead with moving we'd probably both release some equity if we combined the income from the two houses. I won't sponge. And I'm sure there's a lot of other stuff I can do which won't see me at the bottom of some ravine because I sleep drove again'

'Will, this doesn't change anything as far as our proposed living arrangements are concerned'

'Ok. Let's talk about that some more, not now, but later, ok?'

Hannibal doesn't reply but he gets a sort of tight look around the eyes that Will knows well. They do however spend the next ten minutes going over the list. They draft a letter in long hand for Jack until Will feels like they've got everything covered.

'Ok. So I'll email him when we get back. I have to give three months notice. I'll try the department head in a bit, see what she says. She won't call Jack before I get a chance to tell him. I'd like to know what she says before I speak with him. If I'm in hospital tomorrow I can do the next two week's office hours by email, one of the seminars by slack, and I've three prezi lectures they could use. Ok. That's probably ok. Is it alright to go back to Baltimore now and then to Wolf Trap later? I'd like to ask the guys over, take the sting out. I'm not going to tell them before Jack'

'Yes. That's should be fine. I will phone Chiyoh and Charles, we should get both you and Beau to sign the paperwork for Mischa, I'll ask him to get the two sets ready.'

'Please tell Chiyoh, I am beyond sorry'

'Of course. She will understand and I think she might appreciate that you are being proactive about your health'

'Yeah? Good. Ok. Timeline. Two weeks hospital. Maybe out before then but at worst two weeks. I'll get someone in to clean the house in Wolf Trap, ask Val and JP to keep an eye out. Mid March we're supposed to be in Florence. Mischa with Chiyoh at the cabin. Unless the case goes bad in which case all these arrangements will be useful anyhow. I'll call the kennels next, and text Rust too.'

Hannibal continues driving whilst Will speaks first to his kennels, then Valerie his vet, also his friend, then to his head of department at the academy at Quantico. She's much more upbeat than he anticipates.

'Well, that's good. Apparently the field work hasn't been written into my contract, it's all additional consultancy work. As far as she's concerned I don't need to do anything. It'll just revert to normal. She said she'd defend it to the deputy Director, as a return to something they hadn't wanted altered in the first place. She also said if Jack gives me any trouble about it to refer him to her. Amazing. I hadn't expected that. She says I'm popular!'

Hannibal smiles at this. Will might struggle socially but for the most part people like him and certainly he's only ever witnessed positive reactions from his students to his class based work.

'Right... ok...Dad? Hey. Hey. Yeah. Yeah. No Hannibal's driving us back from the hospital. I know. I know. You're right. Did she? Uh huh. Not that's ok. I've written my resignation letter. No she doesn't know that. Jack first. Because he'd kill her. Really. Better this way. Yeah. I think he's pleased. Yeah. Relieved? Probably? Ok he's nodding, so, both those things. Though it will mean he sees more of the boring me. No the academy was fine. I spoke to Rachel,

yeah, I know. Yes. Yes. I know. I was surprised too. But it's a different contract and she'll fight my corner. I'm going to text Rust now. I know. I have to go back into hospital. Tomorrow. Two weeks. I know. I'm sorry. I am. Really. Dad. No don't worry. We'll cover it somehow. I'll call you this evening. Ok. Ok. I love you too dad'

Will goes quiet again as he texts Rust an explanation of what's happened and what might happen next. He's about to speak to Hannibal when the cell rings

'yeah? Rust, hey. My own fault. Entirely. Written. Sending it as soon as we're back. Yup. No. not going to die this time anyway. I know. I'm a fool. I know. No, he's pleased. Yeah. Neither of us. Why? Ok? Really? I'll ask..... Rust says do we need him to come so that you're covered until Chiyoh gets here, if she can come? He can spare up to nine days, he also says he'll drop by tomorrow anyway to the hospital he's got some pictures for us to look at.....ok, Hannibal's nodding. Come and stay and when Chiyoh arrives we can take stock then. Ok? Great. Thanks.'

'What has he found?'

'He's got a bunch of photos, which of course he can't email cos he's a paranoid git and still has a non digital SLR. Can't be manipulated so easily he says. He does take good pictures on it though. Ok. Thanks for putting him up. It helps put my mind at rest too. Dad says he can come end of next week if we need him too. Ok. So you'll call Chiyoh when we get back?'

Will reaches his hand out and rests it briefly on Hannibal's thigh. Hannibal's leg twitches slightly in response.

'I'm just going to pull over for a moment Will'

He does so and Will looks at him in surprise. Hannibal turns in the driver's seat and leans towards him as he reaches out and lightly touches Will's face, his left thumb just grazing Will's cheekbone

'I never can predict you. Thank you Will. I am enormously relieved and very grateful indeed'

He carries on stroking Wills face as they smile at each other across the central console,

'Hey, Hannibal, don't cry, really. It's ok. It's ok'

'It is, I know it is. It's relief. The worry. Mischa told me how scared you were. I couldn't bear this if you did this to yourself multiple times again. I realise your notice period may be difficult, especially as you may not be eligible for sick leave for the whole period. But we shall cross that when we come to it.'

'I love you Hannibal. Hey, look at me, I finally learned to break a destructive pattern. And how to say "no"! Two breakthroughs in one day. Yay to be me!'

Will leans over the console and kisses Hannibal lovingly and gently 'I'd like to be well enough to be able to enjoy my life with you. Really. More opera. Theatre even. Ridiculous meals'

Hannibal laughs 'I'm not sure who it is you have been eating with if you have been eating ridiculous meals'

'Did I say ridiculous? I meant ostentatious?'

Hannibal snorts with laughter.

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'Beverly, Price, Zeller? I want the three of you in my office right now.'

The three lab team members look at each other

'What?'

'I dunno?'

'It's not the Greenwood thing is it?'

'I don't know?'

'Shit, he looks really pissed'

'Yeah. Hey is Bella ok, ok she's not, but she's not worse is she?'

'Oh god I hope it's not that, Will's much better with dealing with him if it's that?'

'Jack, hello, err'

'Sit down, Z get a chair from next door'

Jack glares at Bev and Jimmy until Brian brings a chair in from next door.

'Right. How long have you known and which of you smart alecs decided you weren't going to tell me? Don't give me those innocent faces bullshit'

'Jack, I need more to go on than this. I don't know what could have pissed you off so much'

'Will's resigned'

The three of them oscillate between shock, surprise, annoyance, flabbergasted-ness and all round well fuck me!

'You didn't know? None of you? Bev?'

'No. no idea. Do I look happy to find out this way. Cos I'm not. When, why?'

Bev has a moment when she thinks stupid question girl. The why is obvious. They've got the additional evidence currently in the lab. She's written the report just not given it to Jack yet. She taps it on her knee. Jack hands her Will's letter, printed out, and she reads it to the three of them.

'Ok,' Jimmy ventures 'ok. Not great as far as the case load goes of course, but he's nearly dead Jack and it's not just the encephalitis. It's too much for him. We all know it. He's just too useful. Too good. But I think it's fair enough. Get Clarice back. She could have a go. Heck have her work with Hannibal for a bit. That might be even better than last time. Don't you think?'

'Alright Jimmy, that's not a terrible idea. You swear none of you knew? Alright then. Go on, get out, go home. Go and see your miserable rat friend'

'We're not sinking Jack, he's not abandoning us you know. He's just saving his own life for once'

'Go away Brian. I don't want to hear sense right now, ok?'

The three of them leave Jack's office slightly numbed. Jimmy shakes his head and says 'amazing. Six months in, he's not dead yet so he's out. Incredible. I can hardly believe it. I was almost sure he'd die first. Or something else equally stupid'

As they get closer to the lab all three of them get a text

pizza, Wolf Trap. 6:45 Don't be late, hospital tomorrow for two weeks. Ps two words "plausible deniability" love you, Will pps don't hate me ppps more later

.....

Oh, Baby

Chapter Summary

so, Will resigned from FBI field work, this is the aftermath.

Plus happy Hannigram sex, mildest tentative suggestion of daddy kink, but very mild, mostly just sweet, nice, non manipulative sex

And a sensible relationship discussion, look at them all using words like adults and shit

And Georgia Madchen,

And Rust is back, and so are the Mountain Men

Chapter Notes

NSFW

Fairly vanilla as these things go, tiny bit of spanking, more out of surprise than anything else, surprised them too! Happy Hannigram sex where no one is really trying to manipulate the fuck out of anyone else. Yay!

'From what Beverly said it seems it was sensible to wait until you had told Jack to tell them'

'Yeah, I think so. None of them were happy about it. But I still think it was better this way'

'I agree. For all his failings Jack deserves your prioritisation in this instance at least. How do you feel now? I think your temperature has gone down a little'

Hannibal tries Will's forehead with the back of his hand.

'Yeah, true. I don't feel quite as bad as I did. Maybe it's the relief of having finally decided?'

'I think you are usually happier when issues are resolved or at least not so open ended'

'Yeah. Utter completer finisher me. I prefer it. It means I've resolved something internally. Reached a conclusion. Found my own design. One less thread of silk spinning through my brain weaving it into an impossible gordion knot. It's a relief really. I know Jack is pissed. But hey. That's just how it is. He did fine before me, he'll be fine after me too'

'He sent me an email earlier. No, no, not to harangue me about you. He wanted to know if I might still occasionally be willing to consult. Offer an insight, beyond what I've done before. How would you feel about that?'

'Nosey? Curious? You could go over stuff with me if it was useful. Bounce ideas around. It's not the same as being in the scene. Being the scene. I know Jack appreciates your analysis not just your ability to stop me falling over'

'Something at which I have failed rather conspicuously over the more recent months'

'Yeah. Well, encephalitis. Donald says I've had it for months. And besides, I would have been a lot worse without you. You must know that? Jack knows that. He knows he got a good deal with you. Will get one. If you want to do it.'

'I could say that overall I got the better part of that particular deal. I got you'

'You say that now. But you wait. In six months time I'll be so boring you'll tire of me. I was a lot less interesting before I was in the field I tell you'

Hannibal is quiet and doesn't immediately respond. Will looks at him. He carries on handing him wet china to dry and stack on the counter surface. The team left about an hour ago, mollified in part by pizza and cake. Carbohydrates and sugar, the 21st century's urban pacifiers. By the end of the evening they'd all understood the reasons, had talked them through. Didn't mean they liked it. Or that they'd all miss his presence in the team.

'Hannibal? What is it? What did I say?'

'I'm dismayed that you think I only find you interesting when you are in distress. I know we've established that I am not adverse to being of support to you, in what ever you are doing. Even that I foster some dependency. But I will be delighted to be with you when you are well. You are an endless source of interest to me. That is all'

'Hey. I'm sorry. I meant it more as a throw away comment. Actually. It's probably more to do with my own fears than what I think you would actually do?'

'You fear abandonment?'

'It's what's always happened before. I've come to anticipate it, expect it, I guess. So I stopped trying to have other expectations. I know it's not logical. Here. With us. But emotions aren't logical are they? I guess it's my greatest fear. Losing my mind, losing you. That you'll wake up one morning and have changed your mind, or your heart'

Will sighs and fills the stove top kettle up and sets it on a burner. Hannibal dries his hands and pulls Will closer.

'And still, that is also the fear that besets me daily'

'I don't know why. I'm utterly smitten. Totally. Pretty irrevocably. I told Mischa last year that it was only you, always you, even more so now. I can't believe you feel that. I need to do something else to reassure you don't I?'

'It would seem we both need to make some additional efforts in this respect'

'Ok. Of course. So. What does reassure you? Can you say? Do you know?'

Hannibal takes the kettle off the stove as it boils and pours the hot water onto the tea leaves in the pot. He puts the kettle down and places the lid on the pot. He smiles at Will and takes one hand and brings it to his mouth kissing across the knuckles meeting Will's eyes all the while.

'Let's sit whilst we talk about this. Now there is a bed upstairs it feels almost a waste not to make use of the couch as a couch.'

Will smiles and brings two mugs as Hannibal manages the teapot and a jug of milk. They sit close on the couch Will leaning on Hannibal as is often their habit.

'You know there's this idea that people need different things to know they're loved?'

'I'm sure it's so, what in particular?'

'Some people need touch, regular, different kinds, intimate and casual. Planned and spontaneous. Both mundane and more, I don't know ecstatic? Maybe? Some people like gifts, just little tokens. You know, that show the other person you thought of them and that you know them well enough to get them something they'd like'

Hannibal smiles at this, he'd thought Will's regular offerings were part of an ongoing courtship. Maybe he's expressing what he himself would like. Hannibal has given Will a number of gifts, flowers, a book, as well as the Christmas stocking. Where he demonstrated how well he'd been listening to Will's hopes and needs. All those months before. So. Gifts. He smiles encouragingly at Will 'go on, I'm interested'

'Some people like time, the other person giving them time, spending time with them, or if they're a total nut job introvert like me giving them time to be themselves on their own, either with them but not with them, or..'

'You called it being alone together? I recall. When we were returning from a scene'

'Yeah. Exactly. Where you can be in proximity but not requiring anything from each other except the presence. And sometimes if that's too much, it's ok, being actually alone, but knowing'

'That the other person is there. Could be there? Would be there?'

'Yeah. I can be on my own for ages, but I know you're about, doing your own thing. I like that. Ok. There's two more. Acts of service. Like help with something difficult. Or mundane. Just support. Like you helping dry up without me asking or moaning about it. Anticipating the boring stuff. Or just doing it without expecting a round of applause every time.'

Hannibal smiles, he likes the round of applause. Will sees his smile and it's like he reads Hannibal's mind

'I see you smiling. You're so the last one, words of encouragement and affirmation. You love that! I don't mean it's stroking your ego. It's just you like praise. More than me I think. You certainly don't duck it. Maybe I don't tell you enough?'

Hannibal smiles some more and kisses Will gently.

'Maybe. I think you would like it if I brought a few more small gifts into your life? I'm not talking about an operatic gesture, though I admit I could get carried away. So I shall try to be moderate'

'Funny man. Yeah. I don't want to want it, but I do like it. That book you got me? After the morning in the bookshop? You gave it to me after you kissed me? It was under my pillow until I sneaked it onto the bedside table at Christmas. I thought I looked like a sap. And the flowers you brought me in hospital after Stammetts? A couple of them got pressed and are in one of the encyclopaedias. I do like it. Oh my god. I should be embarrassed. But the scarf? I wore it to bed! To bed! The Christmas stocking made me feel all hot and overwhelmed and totally infatuated with you. That you knew. I felt so known. It was terrifying and amazing'

'So, gifts, I think we both do well on giving each other space and time, though I am glad we won't have to factor a long commute into our daily lives. And yes. I will admit to the 'praise kink' though I think too much might make some of our friends rather sick.'

'Alright. I'll try and keep it moderate in public'

'In private?'

'I'll tell you anything you want to hear'

'I'm going to risk mockery and say thank you. Acts of service? I like doing a number of things for you. I know I can be possessive, and perhaps overly involved, hmm. We've discussed this as part of our wider dynamic, I like that you lean. I want you to'

'Mischa described it that for an arch to stand both sides have to lean'

'Did she? Yes. That's insightful. So maybe we have negotiated that. I feel that now you are resigning from field work we might find an appropriate balance. Because I will always try and support you. Do you understand? Even if it's unsupportable. The last few months I think have underlined this for me. That even when it's bad for you, I have to. I'm compelled to. It's why I'm grateful that you've broken the pattern. That you've pulled us out of this dynamic. I was afraid where it might lead, that we might both fall'

'Oh Hannibal. I feel like we should preserve these words in amber or something. So that if it ever gets bad or I'm tempted we can just look at them, and the light bouncing off them, and be reminded of what we chose instead of what could have happened. Ok. last one. Touch? You touch me a lot at home, here or in Baltimore. I like it. I like it a lot. I'd be happy for a bit more in public? Or is that not something you're comfortable with?'

'I wondered if you thought maybe I was too obvious? I feel like I'm touching you all the time, or thinking about it'

Will grins 'this is why it's good to talk about this shit. I think I've kissed you four times in public, five times if you count Jimmy's party and the convenient bunch of mistletoe. You've embraced me publicly, what, maybe three times? Have we held hands in public? I don't think so. Oh yeah. I held your hand when we danced, and at the opera. You drank my cocktail. And two of yours!'

Hannibal laughs 'how like you to be able to enumerate each occurrence. Would you welcome more?'

'Yeah. I'm not sure I want to actually have sex in the restrooms at the philharmonic, but I'd be happy with more physical demonstrations in public. I love you. I'm happy for people to know that, see that. Really.'

Will puts his cup down and twists so his upper body is facing more towards Hannibal now.

'Kiss me?'

'Of course. Happily'

They kiss, with warm intensity, until Will starts on Hannibal's jacket

'I'm going to be in hospital tomorrow. You better take me to bed right now'

'Now? You're so demanding? What about the tea? What about this comfortable sofa? What about that I'm am exceedingly happy like this, with you in my arms, your lips on mine? What about hmmm'

'Come to bed Hannibal, you're so lovely, so very talented in bed, so very big, so masculine, so delicious'

'And you are not amusing in the slightest. I should punish you, you bad boy'

Will looks at Hannibal and arches his eyebrows

'Really? Fuck. I'm going into hospital tomorrow. That's not fair. Fuck. God you turn me on. Say that again'

'Wicked, incorrigible, impertinent boy. I shall spank you'

'Fucking hell. You better. God. Now. Come on, upstairs. Across your knees? Just your hand? Fuck. Now I'm hard. Wow'

Hannibal smiles at him in surprise and follows him up the stairs, by the time he's reached the upper bedroom Will has already almost utterly disrobed, he's working on his shoe laces one of which he's knotted in his hurry

'Fuck, fuck. This is worse than your buttons. Help me. Please?'

Hannibal drops to one knee and undoes the offending shoe lace and carefully pulls Will's shoe off. He pulls his sock off and rubs Will's ankle and along his calf. Will shudders.

'Here, sit here, I want to sit in your lap'

He pulls Hannibal closer and works on his belt and pants as Hannibal undoes his jacket and shirt and lays them to one side. Will pulls down his trousers and shorts in one go and then kneels on the floor as he pulls Hannibal onto the edge of the bed to sit with his knees apart. Will pushes between them and takes Hannibal's cock into his mouth all at once. Hannibal lets out a long low moan

'Will. You bad, bad, glorious boy. Did I give you permission? You are very naughty indeed'

'You should punish me. Definitely. Hmm god you taste good. Hold my hair. Yeah. Little tighter. Just fuck into my mouth a few times. Yeah?'

Hannibal does as asked and the third or fourth time he feels it, feels the sense of possession and despoilment Will occasionally provokes in him

'God yeah, now you're going to spank me, across your knees. Like this god like this. Please. Just. Fuck. Yeah'

Hannibal says nothing as he slaps Will's bare arse with his hand. He feels a flutter of something. Something that makes him swallow hard. Smacks him in another short volley of sound. Then he pulls Will up into his lap and kisses him urgently. He pushes Wills legs apart and pulls on his cock. Will moans and opens his legs wider. Hannibal runs his hands around Will's balls. Pushes against his hole. Instantly Will throws himself around so he straddles Hannibal lap. Hannibal has much better access like this and squeezes Will's arse hard before reaching blindly behind him on the bed for the tube of lube.

He kisses up into Will's mouth who moans as he is insistently devouring his tongue. He squeezes lube onto his fingers and the pushes round the edges of Wills hole. He adds more lube and pushes again. Fingering Will as he knows he likes. One leisurely afternoon they'd done this for almost an hour Will begging frantically to be fucked by the end. It had been very satisfying for both of them.

He practically lifts Will and pushes him down into the bed with one hand, holds him there as he starts to finger Will lying prone. He uses his mouth to open the lid of the tube of lube and his teeth to squeeze some more onto his fingers and as Will squeals and wriggles under him he works one finger then two, finally a third into him. He fingers him urgently and Will's sounds get louder. He can hear his own panting. When Will is like this it pulls something feral out of both of them. Though the hint of a daddy kink is new. Something to look forwards to perhaps?

'I'm going to fuck you Will. Is that what you want?'

'Please. Oh. Please. Hannibal. I love. You. Only you. Please. Fuck'

Hannibal pushes in and after they both get the fit right, when he's seated and Will sighs with the fullness, he is relentless. Hard. Focussed, with a sharp rhythm and snap. Will gasps at the end of each thrust. Until they are both shouting in unison. They have become good at knowing when the other is getting close to coming. Knowing how to adapt to the other's

rhythm. So they can ride it together. Will is, if anything, louder than usual, more effusive. And Hannibal responds. When they both come there is a tidal wave of silence that follows as they both shout with the release.

Hannibal, as always collapses onto Will. It's one of the things Will adores. To be so fucked he can only lie there under Hannibal's suffocating weight and heat. Hannibal is quietly grateful that Will always waits for him to recover enough to move.

He rolls to the side and Will puts his hand on his face 'I love you. Nothing will come between us. There's only you, it's all for you'

Hannibal takes a deep, long, shuddering breath 'and I for you. Only. Also'

Will smiles 'I'll get a cloth. And some tea. I know you were sad to leave it behind' as he goes out the door he thinks he hears Hannibal say 'wretched boy' his spent cock gives a happy acknowledgement 'fuck'

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Grateful for such intimacies if not for the coming separation they are curled round each other fast asleep in the hours when dawn is still a prospect and a memory. The dogs too sleep. Except Winston who turns his head to one side as a slight figure steps over his sleeping family and goes quietly up the stairs. On the landing she slips in through the one door that is ajar and looks down on the two men asleep on the bed.

She slides under the bed and listens to the rhythms of the two men, the dogs below, the house and beyond out into the fields the woods and the soft dawn. She clings to the floor as though to a lover, closes her eyes. Softly. Softly. You are alive.

At some point she opens her eyes, the weight shifts on the bed above her. She doesn't move, sees two feet appear in her line of sight. Then a shift on the bed as one of the men stands and goes to the adjacent bathroom.

Will rubs his face and throws water over it. He stands next to the toilet and takes a leak still yawning. He might be able to trick his head into going back to sleep if it didn't still hurt so. The headache has returned. He walks softly back into the bedroom and hunts around on the floor for his shirt, it has a foil packet of pills in the breast pocket. As he does so he sees a small foot just sticking out of the underside of the bed. It retreats as he pauses. He gropes around a finds the shirt and the pills.

He sits on the edge of the bed trying not to either panic or startle Hannibal awake. Hannibal doesn't do well with shocks or nasty surprises. Not the ones he doesn't plan anyway. He takes two pills. And carefully raises his feet onto the bed and then curls closely round Hannibal. Hannibal says something unintelligible and shifts as Will presses closer. His breath tickles Hannibal's ear. And he's awake then as Will clasps his hand under the covers. Will breathes into his ear 'someone under the bed' Hannibal turns towards Will as though he has been awoken by a keen lover and makes appreciative sounds covering Will's whispered plan.

Will speaks a little louder 'baby? Did I wake you? I'm making tea, do you want some? It's early yet, I might let the dogs out, come back to you? Ok? Do you want to stay here?'

'How early? Oh Will. It's before six. Darling!' Hannibal sounds more awake now, he shifts over onto what had been Will's side of the bed closer to the door, and then rolls and is out and against the far wall at the same time as Will drops down to see under the bed

'Georgia! Hey. We've met. I'm Will. I came to meet you in Delaware. If you can hear me you're alive Georgia, you're alive, it's just before six, this is Wolf Trap Virginia, you're alive. This is Hannibal. You met his sister. His little sister. Hey Georgia. Come and have tea'

He sticks out his hand, conscious that one slight woman against two men will be no contest even if she came armed. She isn't. She slides out tentatively. She's still scared but she lets them go ahead down the stairs and she cuddles Winston when he wags his way to her. Will makes tea, Hannibal looks her over talking gently all the time, like to a frightened animal, or a very small child. Like a doctor.

He calls Beverly (again? Is this some kind of punishment for slipping it to your dad Graham?) and Bev calls Jack and eventually Georgia is carefully taken into a kind of slightly kinder custody than she might have got straight after killing her friend Beth.

Bev demands coffee, Jack squints at his cup. Hannibal and Will say very little. Silently amused at how discomforted Jack is to take down the detail of the latter part of their night. Eventually Will laughs

'I don't know how long she was there. She might have been there all night, before we got back even. Maybe when we were eating dinner. Or later. If she was I'm not surprised she stayed hidden. We were pretty noisy. This is a good bed but it still creaks, even if we're not being especially' he tries and fails not to smirk at Hannibal 'lively. We were lively for quite a while!'

Bev rolls her eyes and is clearly trying hard not to laugh. Hannibal smiles into his cup of coffee. Jack narrows his eyes 'very good Will. She could have hurt you, or Hannibal. Badly'

'Yeah. She could have. But she didn't. And that's always a win as far as I'm concerned. So. What happens now? She gets treatment?'

'Yeah. She does. The lawyers have it all lined up. Her mother got it together pretty fast after we interviewed her. She'll get treatment, mandatory community service of some kind, and therapy, and lots of treatment. And then, who knows. Maybe she'll be ok. Or something. Maybe.'

'Ok. That sounds good. Sorry to drag you out here Jack. Glad it ended peaceably. I'll be in hospital from later this morning. Drop by if you like. No cases though. It'd be nice just to see you, bring Bella if she can bear the beeping.'

'Alright Will. Be careful. No more murderers under the bed. Get better. Hannibal' Jack nods as he leaves the house.

Bev grins at the pair of them 'you worked that well. Smooth. Haven't seen Jack look that uncomfortable since oh I don't know, Agent Lacey had a bit of a thing for him and kept bringing him little presents. He just didn't know what to do with it. Alright I'm knackered now. Can I sleep on the couch whilst you get ready to go to hospital? I won't get in the way. And you've got a bed now. To be lively in' she yawns an enormous yawn. 'I haven't had a full night's sleep for weeks and it's not even for lively reasons. God I hate this job sometimes'

'you love it Bev. It's your life'

'yeah. Shut up, get me a blanket?'

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Much later the same day Will opens his eyes in a new hospital room, he feels like he could write reviews for Trip Advisor or something - quite nice would accident again. This is his second of the year and it's only February. Hannibal has gone back to his own home to meet with Chiyoh. The three of them plus Mischa will eat something here in the hospital. Hannibal has done some kind of deal with the nurses on the ward that Will thinks involves cake. He smiles to himself. Hannibal is pretty good at getting what he wants usually by fair means. He wonders what foul means he might use if he had to. There's a knock on his door

'Hey Rust? Hey, I thought you'd be here earlier. You ok?'

'Yeah. I brought someone to see you. Well two someones' he opens the door wider and Will struggles to sit up when the two mountain men follow Rust into the room. Alright. Somehow it doesn't surprise Will at all that it looks like the two men have made of Rust some kind of brother the younger man smiles at Will shyly, snuffles.

The older man smiles, 'we found Coyote. He's with us now' he inclines his head towards Rust 'maybe Bear too. We're nearly ready'

'For the storm?'

'For the storm. And who it brings'

Will frowns 'who is it bringing?'

'The shapeshifter. Who changes worlds. And all the people in it. We're going to save you, each other, save everyone. Don't you know it? You should feel the power of it'

'Rust?'

'I've got a taste of their plan Will, the girl's, her cousin. I can feel the shape and move of it. I know you need to be here. Brother Elk here' he nods to the younger man 'he'll keep an eye out. We'll tell your boss he's hired as protection. Just to be sure. We'll speak with Hannibal. Where is he? Coming back?'

Will nods 'yes. With Mischa and Chiyoh. Chiyoh is..' it's a little hard to explain Chiyoh 'she's a watcher too, a friend. Another kind of Sister. With grace. And loyalty'

The older man nods at this 'good. Good. That's all to the good Will. Even though you're here. Could do with you well. But it'll come. I brought you tea and a little help. You send it?'

Will holds his hand out and the old man hands him a small tied pouch. Will doesn't open it just takes the pouch and knots it round his neck on it's long cord, and nods at the man.

'Good. That's good. Coyote has photographs. Get you and Brother Stag to look'

Will looks at him slightly confused, oh yes, Hannibal is the stag. He's the wolf. Beverly the fox. Brian the blackbird, Jimmy the dormouse. The Parliament of Animals. A protection circle. Against whatever it is that's coming. The storm. Burning a path. And the someone that is coming with it. The shapeshifter. Will shivers.

You found the best of me

Chapter Summary

1. Say hello to the Mountain men
2. And lots of nasty Evidence
3. Some better and worse Alibis and otherwise
4. It's not my fault there's only One very bad pun!
5. But there is A nasty deception
6. And of course An escape

'Will? The man outside? Isn't that...?'

'It is. He's my protection inside, here in the hospital. Rust thinks he's found out some sort of plan. Complicated, involves Gideon and Abigail'

'But Gideon's in the BSCHI, oh where Abigail's cousin Em, Matthew is an orderly. Shit. Have they got an escape planned?'

'I'm not sure. Maybe a diversion? Let Gideon out, everyone focuses on him, and then their plan, whatever it is goes down. Maybe it's a Ripper thing?'

'Why? Gideon says he's the Ripper'

'I know, Rust thinks maybe Abigail is hoping that with Gideon out she hopes either he'll prove to be the real Ripper, or it'll draw the real one out. Kind of serial killer showdown. Maybe she wants someone to play with?'

'Seriously? She's crazy. She's good, but the Ripper is out of her league. Really? Isn't he?'

'I don't know. He's good. We've got nothing on him. But she's as slippery as an eel and has properly dumped me and Hannibal right in it.'

'Yeah. About that. I'm not supposed to tell you about this. I'm not supposed to know. But you know how the techs all talk?'

'Yeah. I know. What?'

'The blood on Hannibal's coat?'

Will nods, the one that Agent Krendler took when he came to the house

'Elise Nichols'

'But, what? Wait? Bev, that makes no sense. He was barely involved in the case then. He was in Baltimore when I was at her house. I called him'

'On his cell?'

'Yes on his cell. What difference does that make?'

'You're sure he was in Baltimore?'

'Yeah. I'm pretty sure. You can triangulate it can't you?'

'They might have to. Can you remember anything else?'

'Yes! Yes I can. We went to the bar. Remember. I fell flat on my face. I stayed at Hannibal's. you thought I was drunk. We thought I was drugged. He took some blood for a test'

'What did it say?'

'I don't remember. I don't think I ever heard. I didn't think about it. Mischa told me later she'd done it.'

'So, what was he doing before that evening?'

'It was a Sunday, I don't know. He had dinner with Jack the week before'

'They thought Elise Nichols went home from college for the weekend. Did you talk to Hannibal Friday or Saturday?'

'Shit Bev. I can't remember. Does someone think this implicates Hannibal?'

Bev looks at him stoically 'what would you think? What does the evidence say Will?'

'Oh. My. God. Bev, I have to tell him. You know that don't you?'

'It's why I told you. Idiot. Look, it's not good. But I don't believe it of Hannibal. Seriously? I know he can be a proper scarey son of a bitch but really? No. not really. When's he coming here next?'

'About an hour. He's bringing some lunch. Will you wait? Can you? Will you stay while I tell him. I want to have both of us see his reaction'

'Will? Why?'

'Because I want you to know what it is. Just in case I am royally fucked here'

'Will! You can't think that'

He sighs 'I don't. I'm just fucking scared right now. Can you get the nurse to come. I think she needs to do something with the pain meds'

'Fuck. I'm sorry. You sound so normal I keep forgetting. Shit'

"It's ok. Get the nurse. Bring back some of the secret Dr Lecter cake. Two bits. I'm not sharing'

Bev goes out of the room and returns a few minutes later with two slices of cake.

'I gave some to Mr Mystery outside. How come the nurses have cake?'

'Hannibal's bribing them. To let Mr Mystery aka Brother Elk, (you can smile you're fucking Sister Fox) stay outside, and to let my friends visit when they want' he turns and smiles at the Nurse who comes in

'Alright Dr Graham. Just a little more? How's that? Should feel it right about..... now'

'Yeah. Better. Thank you. How's the cake?'

'I like the banana cream one. There's a lot of argument about who gets the tiramisu. We could stand more of that you know'

'I'll tell him. Thanks'

When the nurse has gone Bev smiles at Will, 'it's going to be ok you know? I don't believe for a moment he's involved'

'No. Nor me. The drugs make me a bit paranoid. Over conscious somehow. It's not helping. And it's just so shit, can we talk about something else until Hannibal gets here. Nice things. I dunno. The bowling team?'

Beverly regales Will with stories of the lab team's bowling successes in the FBI league. They've got an intern at present who is so good it's embarrassing 'he bowled at College, he's good. If he was a bit better as an intern we'd keep him!' It's trivial. It's nothing. It calms Will down. When Hannibal arrives they are both laughing.

'Beverly! How lovely, are you entertaining Will?' He leans forward and lightly kisses her cheek and then the other, she makes a wow-European-ness face at Will who laughs as he lifts his face for Hannibal to kiss him hello too. He doesn't believe it. He won't believe it. He could not be so wrong about Hannibal.

'Hannibal, ok. Your coat that Paul Krendler took? The blood was Elise Nicholls'

Hannibal looks confused 'the dark brown herringbone tweed? But that's impossible. I didn't have that coat then'

Bev and Will look at each other, ok this hadn't occurred to either of them 'when did you get it?'

'Let me think, just before thanksgiving, when we were on the Lost Boy's case'

'Do you have the receipt still?'

'It will be on my account. They only just had it in in time for me to take it with me. I had thought I'd be wearing something slightly less, well,' he pauses. He had wanted something slightly more fitting and elegant. His interest in Will had been gathering steam and he had hoped to make an impression, his pride would rather not take this fall so he finishes 'appropriate'.

Will smiles widely at him, hmm, he might have worked this out, or, maybe because he is pleased about the coat, and what it can't prove. Hannibal doesn't want to frown, but Will knows the tightness round his eyes.

'Hannibal. I know. I'm sorry. I'm scared. I'm not a 100% well. And it's all frightening me. I don't think you're involved but it frightens me. Each little piece? I don't like how it's being added up. I'm sorry.'

He sighs again and holds out his hand, Hannibal takes it. He sits beside Will in one of the chairs and says nothing for a moment

'it is unpleasant to be in a situation where it is all too easy to see how bad this all looks. I am not enjoying this. I understand Will. I appreciate your honesty. Beverly, I assume you told Will? I hope you will feel able to tell me directly too. I realise your loyalty to Will comes ahead of other loyalties you may feel. I find all I can do is re-iterate I was not involved in the murder of any of these girls, nor did I attempt to frame Will'

Beverly and Will look at him, and for a moment Will sees Hannibal as much older and worn down by everything that has happened, is happening. Hannibal stands again and unpacks lunch, and two bowls and cutlery. He decants food and hands a bowl to Will, and the other to Beverly.

'I think I could do with some fresh air. Please eat. I'll come back in a while to collect the plates'

'Hannibal! Please!' If Will could he'd be out of the bed and after him. But the various lines and IVs keep him effectively tied to the bed.

'Beverly? Please. Don't let him go like this'

She gets up and runs after Hannibal down the corridor and then down the stairs. He's been faster than she expected. And she only catches up to him when he's already walking across the hospital gardens towards the lake.

'Bloody hell you're quick. Look I know you don't want to talk to me. But Will's attached to a hospital bed and couldn't get out here. Come back and talk to him. Or not talk. Or something. But don't get all distant. You hate it, Will hates it. I hate it. I love you Hannibal, don't be a dick'

She sort of holds her breath then. She can't quite tell how much of a risk she's taking, he turns and looks at her, a mix of annoyance and perhaps grudging respect is inscribed on his face.

'You're right, I know you are. I feel overwhelmed. It is bad enough with Will relapsing, something I did not do enough to prevent. But this constant pressure from Abigail Hobbs is exhausting'

'I know. It's crap. Come back with me? Eat some of your own delicious lunch. Let your noodle headed boyfriend be nice to you. He's in the boat with you, you know. He's a bit in denial about that, no not the river in Egypt, give me some credit for better puns than that, Hannibal the punnibal!'

He does smile at that 'why do you say he's in denial?' He smiles a bit more at the awful pun

'I haven't told him. Because I'm a coward, I wanted to ask you first. Do you know for sure where Will was for Cassie Boyle's murder, or even Marissa Schurr's?'

'He was at the cabin for Cassie Boyle, for Marissa too. We were in Minnesota, you and I, the both of us. Why is he under scrutiny? The Flies?'

Beverly nods 'they've been examined by an expert who says they were made by someone who knows what they're doing. He hummed and haaa-ed a lot about the idea that someone added things to them. He seems to think they're all made by just one person'

'But I made one of them'

'Ok, I'm not sure they told the expert that. That's worth knowing' she gets out her cell and types in a note to herself 'I'm going to ask you what I asked Will about the coat, do you think he had anything to do with these deaths? Not going to ask again. This is it.'

'I do not believe it. Not in the slightest. Even at his most unwell none of his aggression, if we could even call it that was ever turned outwards, it was all self oriented. Do you think they are likely to call us in over this?'

'I don't know, but I'd get all the coat stuff together ready, it won't look odd for you to be prepared as they specifically took the coat, which, by the way Abigail identified from a photograph. So if nothing else she's perverting the course of justice, because it has to be a lie.' Bev pauses 'you don't have one like it do you?'

'No. Not in any shade of brown or with a contrasting colour. That's why I purchased this one. Which I rather lament the loss of'

'Good I'm glad about that. Well, sorry about the coat. I don't know what the plans are, I'm not supposed to know this. They might be trying to make a case, it's all very circumstantial so far. Come on let's go in before Will loses his mind'

She tucks her hand into his elbow and they return inside. At the door to Will's room Beverly stops to have a one sided conversation with Brother Elk, now eating a large piece of cake. She lets Hannibal go ahead so that he and Will can have a private moment to make up. She gives them five minutes and then her hunger wins.

She knocks, 'alright stop snogging' and then smirks as Hannibal stands up from the bed and flattens his hair at the back. Will too looks somewhat disheveled. But he usually does. 'Where's my lunch?' She says 'it's hard work sorting this stuff out'

Hannibal re-apportions the food and they sit and eat. All three of them are possibly just slightly deflated,

'Basically we've joined the game too late. We haven't got the hang of the rules. Or the teams. It's been in play for a while and we weren't paying attention. We didn't know. Is Rust at the house?'

'He is, he's with Mischa until Chiyoh arrives this afternoon. I must go soon, I have patients to see this afternoon. I shall return this evening. Is that acceptable Will?'

'Please. Sorry about before'

'Not at all. There is still work for me to do. At least you sent a proxy'

'Wow. That's what I am now. The new Will Graham? Nice. Can I come home with you Hannibal? Will you cook me meals? Say nice things to me? You're awfully cute. I'd be a good "Will" but sassier and less prone to unusual neurological behaviour'

Hannibal smiles at her 'I shall have to consider it seriously. And now, I must go, there are people who require my presence even more than you two do. Will, my love. Beverly, as ever in your debt'

As he leaves he hears her say to Will 'see, he likes me better than you. You wait you'll be in hospital and I'll have him all to myself, and the mountain men, and Rust, and Chiyoh and Mischa. So there, it'll be just me and Hannibal and five other people! I can totally snog him before you get out of here'. Hannibal smiles as he hears a cry of indignation from Will and the sound of something being thrown. His good humour has almost been restored.

'Alright Will. Stop fucking your own mind now. You both don't think the other did it. Let's stick with that shall we? Every time something comes up we know it either is a lie or its damn close to one'

'Yeah. You're right. This is killing me. 1000% done. Ok? Done.'

'Do you think we were ok sending Hannibal back on his own?'

'He's only going to his office isn't he? That should be fine. Shouldn't it?'

'Well. I guess so. It's just that when he's alone at the office he's vulnerable. Remember Budge nearly killed him and his patient last year'

'Fuck. Now I'm going to worry about this. Look he's going straight there. He's got patients from 2:30 until 6:00 he's coming straight here then. Rust is bringing Chiyoh and Mischa. It's fine. It should be fine. Fuck it.

'I really hope so'

.....

At 6:45 Rust arrives with Mischa and Chiyoh bringing takeout from a restaurant Hannibal deems acceptable. He's brought cutlery and crockery too. Will is just starting to feel edgy when Hannibal arrives at just past 7:00 pm. He tries not to be be too obvious about his relief.

'I think we're all a little anxious. Maybe it'd help if we all talked through our plans for the next few days, so everyone knows where everyone will be?' Rust smiles at the rest of the group 'Hannibal?'

'Earlies tomorrow. Home for noon, I hope to cook then and bring Will lunch at about 2:00pm I've an appointment with my lawyer tomorrow afternoon, and then I shall, no, damn I've an emergency referral tomorrow mid evening 6:00pm until 7:30pm or so.'

'So we cover you between the lawyer and the evening appointment? Will you come here after?'

'I hope so, I plan to. Will?'

'Yes. Good. Will you have the paperwork from Charles?'

'I believe so. I shall also speak with him about the latest events in the case'

'Sounds sensible. Oh. Have you met the referral before?'

'No. Why? He's from a colleague who does refer occasionally. You've met him Will, Wolf Franks?'

'Yeah. Ok. Did he make the appointment or did the patient? Did they speak to you?'

'The patient did. To my appointment service. That's not particularly unusual. Why?'

'Could you check with Wolf, please?'

'Of course. Though I think this is a step beyond' he smiles indulgently at Will and draws his cell phone from his pocket, keys in a number 'Wolf? Hannibal Lecter. Yes. Thank you. No. that's right, relapse. Two weeks I hope. I shall, that's kind of you. I'm calling about the referral. From you. For tomorrow evening. 6:00pm? Oh. I see. Well I'm glad I checked. No, no, I'm sure just some wires crossed. Thank you. Yes, let's do that, when Will is out of hospital. Thank you, I shall'

'I'm glad we checked. Thank you Hannibal'

'It simply didn't occur to me. Though, this does provide us with an opportunity'

'We can be ready for anyone who does show at 6:00pm at your office. Should we tell Jack or Agent Krendler? Rust, what, do you think?'

'Tell Jack Crawford. We've got to get every incident on record'

'Ok, I'll do that. I don't like this. What with Gideon as well. If they can't get to us. Who else might they go after? Chiyoh will look after Mischa, I've got Brother Elk, Rust effectively you've got Hannibal's back. Dad's at home. I guess the others that are a bit of an issue, are those who are friends with both of us, Bev, Jimmy, Brian. Normally I'd say Alana. But maybe she's off the list at the moment?'

'Does she know what's going on at present?'

'I don't know. She argued with Bev as well as us'

'That makes her vulnerable I think. And Abigail isn't very nice to her about us. So she might not listen even if we told her something sensible.'

Hannibal looks at Mischa 'yes. You are right. But I should not let that get in the way of warning her. I'll call her now.' He enters a new number into his cell 'her answering service, I'll try her office, the same, I think I have her home number, also the answering service. I don't like this'

'Try Port Haven, she might be there' Hannibal nods at Will 'hello, this is Dr Lecter, is Alana Bloom on site today? Is she? Very well. May I leave her a message? If you would. Thank you..... she's there at the moment'

Everyone believes a small sigh of relief, perhaps not conscious of the way in which the tension in the room went up bit by bit as he failed to contact her.

'Is there anything else we can do now?'

'We're just waiting for the other shoe to drop aren't we? Effective of them to kind of screw us up like this'

'Damned if we do and damned if we don't?'

'Rust, how long do we keep on like this?'

'I think maybe a week, ten days or so. The other Brother is keeping an eye on Port Haven for us. I'm working on someone in the Hospital for Gideon'

'Alright. Let's talk about something nicer for a bit. Mischa how was the coat buying and cake?'

Mischa smiles broadly and gets the little photos she took with the instant camera 'don't we look wonderful?'

At the end of the evening Will is pretty exhausted but he'd felt relieved having them all together.

'Too much for you?' Asks Hannibal just as they are all leaving

'Better than worrying. Be careful. Please. Really'

'I shall. More so. The referral was a neat trick. How did they know about Wolf Franks?'

'We sat with him and his wife at the dinner'

'Yes we did. Damn. Your analogy of the game was useful. We must play a little better'

'Yeah? Can we not just abandon the match. Export Abigail. Like the British used to do with convicts? Send our problem somewhere else'

'If only it were so simple for any little difficulty we might face'

'Is that a dig at me? I'm not so little'

'But a difficulty you don't disagree with?'

'Aren't you going home yet?'

'I'm sorry it isn't yet home'

'It almost is'

'Good'

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In the morning what's all over the news is that Abel Gideon has indeed escaped. He's leaving a trail of dead psychiatrists over Maryland and the border with Virginia. All people who have treated him in the past, or have had something to say about his psychosis in the medical and psychiatric press. Frederick Chilton has gone into hiding and Alana who interviewed Gideon twice is holed up with Margot on the Verger Estate.

When she and Hannibal had spoken late in the evening she had been slightly dismissive, but grateful that he should think to tell her the things that were of current concern. It doesn't make things better but it does perhaps begin the healing process between them.

What they didn't anticipate was Gideon kidnapping Freddie Lounds. Mischa is desperately upset.

The rest of me

Chapter Summary

The Freddies might be saved, but at what cost?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

'Dr Du Maurier. Thank you for seeing me. I realise you can't speak to me of your patient Hannibal Lecter, but I'm actually more interested in someone who was a patient of his'

Bedelia Du Maurier schools her face 'Will Graham? Some how I knew I'd end up talking to the FBI about Will Graham. The very special agent'

Jack Crawford looks at her bemused 'actually no. I wanted to ask you about Abigail Hobbs?'

'Abigail Hobbs? The daughter of the man Will Graham killed. Whom Hannibal saved?'

'Yes. Her.'

Bedelia is surprised 'I know he was seeing her at the behest of Alana Bloom, she's the lead on Abigail's case. You might do better to ask her'

'I'm asking you'

'Well, yes. What do you suspect Hannibal of?'

'He may have pertinent information relating to a murder that he is currently keeping from us'

'To do with Will?'

Jack frowns. Can he get Bedelia off the topic of Will Graham? 'No. still to do with Abigail'

'He's barely mentioned her. I think he was frustrated by his apparent lack of progress in her treatment. But events conspired to bring that to a halt'

'And do you think he had a hand in that? He does have a history of complicated relationships with patients'

'Complicated patients lead to complicated relationships'

'Alright. I can see that. They do.'

'His relationship with Will is complicated'

Jack sighs, 'Err. I thought it was all pretty clear now'

'Hannibal would go to great lengths to protect a friend. He doesn't have many of them. So those he does have inspire loyalty'

'You think he'd be loyal to Will?'

'Indubitably.'

'And Abigail? What might he feel in relation to her?'

'Frustrated. As I mentioned. Surprised perhaps. He is usually effective in his treatment plans. Sometimes too much so'

'But not with Abigail. Why do you think that was?'

'He may have been distracted'

'You're going to say by Will Graham aren't you?'

'I am. He has become something of an obsession for Hannibal'

'And for you' says Jack under his breath, 'I don't believe Dr Lecter is dangerous, or at least, not in relation to Will Graham'

'We shall have to see'

.....

Freddie Lounds composes a new article on the Ripper as Abel Gideon sits on a bench beside her and swings his legs.

'You're both doing awfully well. Frederick are you comfortable? I hope so. Local anaesthetic is by far preferable in circumstances such as these'

'Are we waiting for something?'

'Someone. I know he's a fan. So I'm optimistic'

'A fan? Of the Ripper? Aren't you the Ripper'

'Now. Ms Lounds that's not very nice. I may not be entirely sure who I am these days, but there's no need to be condescending. That's who we're waiting for'

'You think he'll come here?'

'Oh yes. There were little jokes you see. In all the other little messages. They'll point him here. He has got a sense of humour if nothing else'

'Why will he come?'

'Dr Chilton of course. Who wouldn't want a little tilt at the man who tried to steal your identity. Terrible thing to lose you know. Your sense of self'

'So we're just waiting?'

'For the time being. In a bit I'm going to give Frederick a little tickle. You'll like that won't you'

.....

'Will. I have to ask you to look. There are six dead already. He's got Freddie Lounds, we thinks he's got Frederick Chilton too. Think of Jimmy'

'Low blow Jack. Low'

'Yeah. Alright. But he'd ask if he thought he'd got a chance'

'Oh for fucks sake. Get me a wheelchair. And my coat and some shoes and socks. Fucking hell. I'm going to tell Hannibal, get him to meet me at the lab. I'm not going to some scene Jack. This is the compromise I'm offering. And it's only because of the Freddies..... double fucking hell, you know he'll kill me..... Hannibal? In a sec I'm going to give you the phone so you can shout at Jack and not me. Yeah. Yeah. I know. I know. The lab. I said no to that. Definitely. Because of Jimmy, and Mischa. Yeah he said that, and that too. And I'm passing you over now..... he's just gearing up Jack, your turn'

Jack takes Will's cell reluctantly

'Dr Lecter, Hannibal.....' Will watches Jack listen for a good five minutes without saying anything. A couple of times he can hear Hannibal's voice quite clearly. Yeah he's not a happy Hanni-bunny. At all. 'Alright. Thank you. We will see you there'

Jack hands the cell back to Will

'Come on then, I'll wheel you out. Try not to faint, or he might do something I'll regret'

.....

At the lab Jimmy is quiet and looking miserable. When Will is wheeled in he rushes to hug him

'Thank you Will. Thank you'

'Alright Jimmy. I can't promise but we can try, can't we? What have we got?'

Bev gives Jack a mean look and takes the chair from him and pushes Will around the bodies laid out on the tables in the morgue. All stainless steel and competence.

Hannibal arrives with Rust ten minutes later. He doesn't bother to engage Jack in a battle of wills (ha, how true is that, see what we did there?) and the two of them lean against an empty table.

Over the next thirty minutes the fractious group gradually pull together various clues and hints and little visual jokes on the current bodies. A tie pin through one of the tongues with an enamelled Jupiter, a pocket square with stars on it, eye glasses removed from their frames and the lenses pushed into the sockets.

'Why the observatory?'

'Do you remember the first article Freddie wrote about the Ripper. Not Gideon, the Ripper'

'Oh, but that was years ago. It was the, what, second victim? You really think he'd go there?'

'I think he's sending an invitation. And we know the Ripper reads tattlecrime.com. What better way. Ripper reads his own press notices'

'Freddie hasn't dropped any hints'

'Freddie is the hint'

'Oh. Right. Ok then let's go and find out. Will I'm sorry but we'll need you. Just in the car' Jack looks like he might be ready to duck but Hannibal doesn't flex either his voice or a muscle. He takes Will's chair from Beverly

'Don't think we shan't be having a conversation about this later Will'

'Yeah. I know. You want to face Mischa or Jimmy if anything happens and I could have stopped it? They're our friends Hannibal, it might be their lives'

'I care about your life Will'

'I know. Shall I come with you? Did you bring Rust's car?'

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At the observatory a huge team of FBI and police are ready to launch themselves inside on Jack's mark.

Inside they find Freddie Lounds badly shaken but alive and keeping Frederick Chilton alive on a manual respirator

'He's still alive' she says slightly hysterically. And Frederick is, despite the organ displacement that Gideon found time for.

'Dr Lecter? A little help here' Hannibal looks at Will and then at Jack waving from the doorway a hundred feet or so away

'Will? Stay here please. I'll be back as soon as possible'

'Yeah alright. Be careful. Send Rust back if you see him. Just so that, you know'

Hannibal walks swiftly to Jack and is pulled into a conversation and something else inside the main dome. Will sighs. He looks around. Most of the team seem to be either dispersed or inside. Where the action is. He's quite happy not to be where the action is. He closes his eyes

When someone gets in a closes the front driver's door he assumes it's Rust at first. It isn't

'Well Dr Graham. And here I was thinking I was going to meet with the Chesapeake Ripper. Unless. Are you he? And I must say, whilst I look crazy. You just look kind of ill'

'Yeah. Hello Dr Gideon. That's because I am. Encephalitis. I'm only here because of the Freddies'

'Ah yes, Freddie 1 and Freddy 2. Very fitting. So. Where are we going now then? I can be your chauffeur anywhere you like'

'Really? I'd quite like to go back to hospital'

'Hmm. Maybe not anywhere. Maybe somewhere. What about your nice doctor friend?'

'Which one?'

'Oh you have so many do you? How about a mutual acquaintance then?'

'I don't think we know anyone in common'

'Oh I'm sure we do. That lovely Dr Bloom for instance. Now where could we find her? Hmmm? Have you got a cell phone?'

Will thinks to lie 'no, I left it at the hospital, it's out of charge, no point'

'Well exsqueeze please if I don't believe you for even a moment. Phone. I've still got three scalpels and you may not be a trick cyclist but I know hubby is'

Will gives up his cell trying desperately to remember if Alana or Margot's addresses are in there along with their numbers.

'And here we go. Isn't this fun. A little trip together. Who's is the car. It's not your hubby's is it?'

'No. and we're not married'

'Ahh, but you will be. Though I have to say you and me, we're the kind of people who shouldn't be in relationships. We always hurt the ones we love.'

'That's not true'

'You've never hurt him? No nasty little comment? No spiteful rejoinder? No little manipulations? My you must be a perfect kind of guy. A real heart throb. Oh you've hurt him, again and again. And when you do tie the knot don't think you'll make it all go away with a little kiss. You don't know what hell he'll be. Hard to be with someone else when you can't

get out of your own head. You and me we're already committed' he gives a little hysterical giggle.

'Abel. I really don't know what you mean. Where are we going'

'Why to visit Dr Bloom. She said she didn't know who I was. Terrible thing to have your identity taken from you. I told Dr Chilton that. Terrible. She had a good go. Off we go. And I childlocked the doors, so have a good slump if you like.'

Will takes Gideon's advice and slumps against the door. This is definitely a bit much for him. Shit. He feels much worse. His temperature is definitely up. He should have brought the drip with him. He could have hung it in the car. These and other disconnected thoughts angle around his brain. Along with the hurt and pain.

.....

At the observatory Hannibal has more or less put Frederick Chilton together enough for the EMT to be able to wheel him into a waiting ambulance. Jimmy goes with him after clasping Hannibal tightly 'tell Will I'm very grateful'

In all they've been inside for maybe forty minutes. Outside the different groups split up to rejoin the cars, the lead recovery team already inside and collecting and collating.

Rust catches up to Hannibal 'good what you did in there. Saved his life.'

'I hope so, if only for Jimmy's sake. Where did you park the car?'

'Right behind the big SUV. Which has gone. So's the car. Fuck'

'Where's Will? Jack? Have you got Will over there? Beverly?' No one has heard Hannibal actually sound panicked before. Jack storms over to where Hannibal and Rust are standing, Bev and Brian already heading towards them. Freddie follows Bev.

'He was in the car. He was waiting' Hannibal looks beyond shocked

'He still wants the psychiatrists'

'Freddie? What?'

'Gideon. He wants all the people who messed with his brain. He mentioned Alana'

'She's at the Verger place'

'Have you checked?'

Jack pulls out his cell 'Dr Bloom? Where are you? Alright. Lock the doors. Stay away from the windows. Right now' in the distance Jack hears the sound of a shot 'Alana? Alana?'

'I'm alright. I'm alright. Oh. Oh.....They're outside. Oh my god. Jack, Jack.....Will shot Gideon. He's collapsed. Oh my god'

Jack hears her drop the phone 'they're at Dr Bloom's she says Will has shot Gideon'

He doesn't get the chance to say any more as everyone rushes for their cars. Fast.

By the time they reach Alana Bloom's townhouse ambulances and the local PD have arrived for both Will and Abel Gideon. Not dead. Just winged. Will however has had a seizure and is unresponsive.

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'His temperature peaked at 105. It wasn't a stroke, which is something, his white blood cell count is twice what it should be'

Hannibal sits with Rust and Beverly outside Will's hospital room. Brian is standing leaning against the wall, Freddie is sort of leaning against him or beside him. Alana is sitting on the arm of Bev's chair. Jack is just standing. Maybe swaying slightly. Brother Elk sits on the floor, his back against the wall his knees drawn up. He hadn't gone with Rust and Hannibal, feels badly about it now.

'And despite this he still brought Gideon down. Knew where we'd find him too'

No one answers Jack. Of course everyone is glad that the Freddies are alright, that Alana is. But Will.

'They're going to keep him in an induced coma for the next forty-eight hours. Then see if they can bring him round without further damage'

'Hannibal, he did save me. I am grateful. I don't know what to say. I'm sorry.'

'I'm sorry too Alana. For all of this. And it may not even be the end'

'What do you mean?' Alana looks round the group. Most of these people are people she knows well, has been friends with. Bev was her closest friend for a long time. She'd known Hannibal for more than a dozen years. Even Jack she'd known since he'd joined the BAU.

'Alana. You have a professional relationship with someone who is implicated in maybe a dozen deaths. In a case into which Hannibal and Will have been drawn. I'm sorry, there are things you can't know at present'

'Jack? What do you mean? Are you talking about the evidence that implicates Will or Hannibal or both of them?'

'Alana. Stop, please. Not here. Not now'

'Hannibal? What do you all know that you won't tell me?'

'Sweetie, come on, come with me, I'll tell you what I can' Bev looks at Jack and he nods slightly. She may be in this up to her neck, but he still trusts her judgement. Mostly. She pulls Alana to her feet, slings an arm round her and pulls her away from the group, away down the corridor.

'Thank you everyone. If you don't mind I'd like to spend a little time with Will, just the two of us. Please feel welcome to go or stay as you'd like. The nurses here are very helpful. No one will mind. I'd be glad of a coffee in about half an hour if anyone can manage it' Hannibal doesn't smile, but his voice is level again. Jack departs, Brian goes in search of Jimmy who is somewhere else in the hospital waiting for news of Frederick. Freddie waits with Rust and Brother Elk, eventually persuading the mountain man to come and get coffee with her. He's strangely solid and reassuring. And after the evening she's had she wants someone who will mostly listen and nod solemnly.

Rust sits with his legs stretched out and tips his hat over his eyes. He's not asleep just resting them. He doesn't believe it's over yet. There's more to come for sure. Sleep, piss and eat while you can. Three things that will see you through most things in life.

.....

Inside Will's hospital room the noise from various machines is the percussive susseration that lets Hannibal know that inside his perfect outer shell Will is still alive albeit not kicking.

Hannibal would like him to be kicking, him for preference, specifically he would like to be kicked from here to Quantico and back for letting Will go back into the fray, to be within even a mile of the scene. A mile of Gideon. And would he have sacrificed any of the other three to save Will from this? Yes. Again and again. He might like Freddie, feel fond of Alana, tolerate Frederick, but none of them, even combined is worth Will.

He sits beside Will. Something close to despair sweeps over him. He rests his head on the bed close to where Will's hand is. Not quite crying. More a desperate litany of prayers and invocations. He half sits up his elbows resting on his knees as he reaches for Will's hand and pulls it to his lips and kisses it. Only two days ago he did this and Will had laughingly pulled him to bed. He feels like he'd like to howl. Or break something. Or someone.

He's been so restrained.

.....

Alana is quiet. Beverly has talked her through the lies, the so called evidence, the scheming. It doesn't even look like that big a thing when it's reduced to its elements. But she underlines the way suspicions, uncertainty, and fear have amplified everything. That part of Will's illness has been exacerbated by the stress of one of either he or Hannibal being set up.

Alana knows she's been taken for a fool. And Will had still saved her. He might have been kidnapped, but when it came to it he had retrieved Rust's gun from the glove compartment and followed Gideon out into the snow. And shot him. And at what cost? She shudders

'What can we do? What can I do?'

'Right now? Probably nothing'

'And Abigail?'

'Keep on doing what you're doing. Just be a bit, I dunno, smarter about it?'

'Yes. You're right. I'll try. What about Hannibal?'

'We should wait. He's had a lot of crap to deal with from the Feds, as well as with Will. He's got the whole thing to do with Mischa hanging over him too'

'I don't understand'

'It's a condition of her residency that she has two guarantors. Chiyoh is one, Hannibal is the other. Will's just signed papers to make him the third. Beau is the back up. In case Hannibal is arrested or Will is ill. We didn't think it'd be both of them but in case. But it's a stress for Hannibal. Mischa is a little scared too. I know you didn't like her but she's had a tough time too'

'I'm sorry. I was defensive and aggressive. I'm really sorry Bev'

'Yeah. We all are. For everything. Crap isn't it'

'I'd like us to be friends again? Can we try'

'Sure. But you know the stuff with Abigail isn't going away any time soon don't you?'

'I'm not sure what else she can do'

'And that's been our problem all along. None of us can see it'

.....

Late that night Rust drives himself and Hannibal back to the house in Baltimore. Brother Elk left behind at Will's door. In the kitchen they find Chiyoh and Mischa, she jumps up and then carefully embraces her brother and pulls him out of the room whispering to him.

'How is he?'

Rust grimaces at Chiyoh 'induced coma. Next couple of days. Not looking good. Not awful. But they need the fever to break. It was 105. Febrile convulsions'

'Terrible for both of them'

Rust nods slowly 'yes. It is. Will Hannibal try anything?'

'Against the girl?'

'Do you think she's the reason'

'It is hard to not conclude such a thing'

Rust collects a beer from the fridge 'you're right. But it's not just her is it? Her cousin, the other guy'

'Abigail is the leader in this'

'She is. It might be her cousin who got Gideon out though, I don't know. I don't know if they've looked at the footage yet'

'You should keep a closer eye on Hannibal-San, he is distressed. It may make him reckless'

'Of his own safety or other's?'

'Both'

Rust looks at her considering, she's known the siblings for a long time. Through happy times and the worst.

'What might he do?'

'Hannibal-San believes in family. Mischa, Will, me, Beau Graham now too, even some of their friends. There is little that he would not do for family. He helps his family. Mischa is the same'

'You too?'

'Of course. I am their family and they are mine. We help each other'

Rust crumples his can and gets another from the fridge

'What might he do, if he was really pushed to the limit?'

'I do not think you really want to know that'

'Tell me'

'Hannibal-San has many forms of influence'

'Some of them harder than the others?'

'Equally persuasive. But different'

'You know what he's going to do, don't you?'

Chiyoh doesn't answer but drinks another mouthful of tea. Rust swallows his beer. Then something in his gaze changes. Rust gets up and keeping an eye on her backs out of the kitchen, then through the dining room into the hall

'Hannibal? Mischa? Hannibal?'

He rushes back to the kitchen

'Where have they gone?'

'It is enough they are gone'

'But where? It's not safe for them'

'It is only safe for them'

'You don't get it do you? They've been waiting to split us up. Something will happen to them'

'No. Hannibal will happen to them'

'Chiyoh! For god's sake tell me'

She doesn't answer and Rust swears loudly.

.....

In the morning Abigail Hobbs is reported missing from Port Haven.

Chapter End Notes

You're very close to the end of season one! Just one more episode to go. And it's a short one!

Trailers for season two:- a Ravenstag, confused Will, the BSCHI, a trial, another trial, another kind of trial.

After the storm the angry river rises... stay tuned...

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!